

Robert Isham's identity intrigued another descendant of John Isham. A letter Ralph Isham, son of Ralph and Laura Worthington Isham, wrote to the New England Historical and Genealogical Society in January 1873 sheds some light on the interest in Robert. Ralph wrote: "Can any reader of the journal inform me of what became of Robert Isham age 14 who left London for Virginia in August 1635 in the ship the Globe with Jeremy Blackman the master?"

Also, who were the ancestors of Joseph Isham of Colchester, Connecticut, who had a son Joseph, Jr. born in 1734?" At the time Ralph was the Isham family historian. Isham descendants have Ralph Isham to thank for that because he not only got the information he was seeking about the two Josephs, he logged that information and made it available to other Ishams.

Unfortunately, Ralph did not live long enough to learn who Robert Isham was. On May 16, 1874 a dam holding back the Williamsburg Reservoir along the Mill River in Massachusetts burst, sending a Tsunami wall of water through the valley killing 187 people. Ralph, a bookkeeper at a button mill, was one of the victims of the flood. Curious minds can only wonder if Ralph Isham was onto something. But if Robert were in some way related to John, what was that relationship? Robert was born in 1621. John was born in 1654.

The age difference allows for the possibility that Robert could have been "the" John Isham's father.

But that does that tell us how John Isham found his way to Massachusetts?

Perhaps the story of one of Robert Isham's shipmates might shed some light on unraveling the mystery of John Isham.

Aboard the Globe in 1635 was 16-year old Job Tyler.

He was traveling from London to Virginia alone. He didn't stay in Virginia for long. About three years after his arrival he was off to Massachusetts where, after having a rough go of it, he eventually settled down, got married and raised a family.

Interestingly enough, four other young passengers on the Globe were not destined to remain in Virginia.

Notes on these four individuals on the Globe's manifest indicated they were ultimately bound for Massachusetts.

Some historians have gone so far as to postulate that the Globe might have had to land first in Massachusetts due to bad weather. People living today are not aware that there was a real connection between Virginia and New England. There was heavy trading going on between the two colonies. Cargo ships were traveling between Virginia and Massachusetts with regularity. Bermuda and Barbados played an important role in the growth of the colonies.

It was not uncommon for someone from England to first settle in Bermuda or Barbados before moving to the Colonies.

Unfortunately ship manifests for passengers traveling from the islands to the Colonies are scarce or incomplete.

John Isham could easily have lingered on the islands before sailing to Massachusetts. That, of course is conjecture.

What we don't know about John Isham should in no way cast a long shadow over what we do know,

because what we do know is the first significant chapter in the over 300 year story of the Ishams in America.

What do we know about John Isham?

What follows is reliable information on John Isham of Barnstable, the Massachusetts town where he married, raised a family and eventually died in his 59th year:-

John Isham was admitted a freeman on Mar. 4, 1691-92, under the new charter which united Plymouth with the Bay Colony. Freeman were not required to be church members at this time. Of John Isham's religious views there is no written evidence. That he did not belong to the Congregational Church at West Barnstable is certain, for his name is not among the extant lists of its members. Neither were the baptisms of his children recorded. That he was tolerant is shown by the fact that he witnessed the will of a prominent Quaker*, an act which implies previous acquaintance and perhaps sympathy with the Quakers. Was John Isham himself a Quaker? If so, the records of the Sandwich Quaker Meeting should perhaps contain evidence, if they are as early as John's time. Unfortunately the records do not include his name. What reliable information we have regarding John Isham, the settler, comes from the public records of the town of Barnstable. The records of Plymouth county do not mention him. The records of the county of Barnstable, dating from 1685, and one volume of the Probate records were destroyed by fire when the Court House was burned on Oct. 22, 1827. This loss involved records of conveyances of land, and probably records of the County Courts. There still remain the proprietors' records, records of births, marriages and deaths, the probate records, except the one volume destroyed, the books of town proceedings, and certain church records. The original vital records of Barnstable do not now exist. A copy made about 1736 is the basis of the existing records. Some errors in the transcript of 1736 have been detected. The record of the marriage of John Isham and the recorded births of his children as they appear in the transcript are all ten years too early. This was discovered long ago, perhaps by the transcriber himself.

"Ten year too oulde" is written in the margin opposite the entry.

*To be a Quaker in the colony of New England was to run the risk of being fined, imprisoned, banished and killed for beliefs. John Isham left a will in Oct. 1713 with £159, 16s, 6d returned in the inventory and the real estate being divided to the 3 sons.

JOHN ISHAM married Jane Parker on Dec. 16, 1687 at Barnstable.

(their nine children who were all born in Barnstable)

Jane, b. Oct. 7, 1689; m. Michael Wilson.

John, b. Aug. 25, 1691; m. Deborah Daggett.

Isaac, b. Feb. 7, 1692-93; m. Abigail Lumbert.

Sarah, b. Dec. 1694; m. Joshua Lovell.

Mary, b. June 1697; m. Abel Crocker.

Patience, b. in 1699 unmarried.

Hannah, b. 1701 m. first Peter Blossom, the great-great grandson of Rev, John Robinson of Leyden, Holland

Joseph, b. in 1704 (B); m. first Susannah Swift; m. second Temperance Calkins.

Thankful, b. about 1706; m. Joseph Butler.