

ENGLISH RECORDS FOR JOHN MASTERS AND HIS FAMILY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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There has been no credible evidence published about John Masters before he immigrated to New England and settled first in Watertown and then Cambridge, Massachusetts Bay Colony. Many claims, especially in self-published family history books and personal online databases, are births for John occurring all over England, some of which can be found as baptisms in digitized databases of parish registers. Some have dug deeper and assumed or speculated, based on his association with the Barrington family, that he came from their home county of Essex.^[1] His likely immigration in the Winthrop Fleet has led to guesses that he came from the home counties of other Fleet passengers such as Gov. John Winthrop, a native of Suffolk. Jane Masters's death in Cambridge in 1639 infers she was his widow, although it doesn't say so. This led to the popular and early claim that they were the John Masters and Jane Coxe who married in Bath, England, in 1597, with no apparent reason other than the name matches and the assumption that Jane was John's widow was the mother of his children.^[2]

A group of records for St. Saviour Parish in Southwark, Surrey, England, make it clear this is where the Masters family lived for many years before immigrating. Church records include baptisms for children of tailor John Maisters, including Sarah, and the marriage of Sarah Maisters to Michael Dobinson or Dobison. The will of John Masters of Cambridge names a daughter "Sarath Dobyson," about whom nothing else was previously known. A comprehensive record of sacramental tokens for the parish include John Maisters and Michael Dobbison recorded in a way that shows the Dobbisons succeeded the Maisterses as tenants of a property about the time John and some of his children came to New England. Also in the will are Abraham and Nathaniel Masters, the only legatees without a stated family relationship. Although John of Southwark had sons with these names, they died young. Based on records for St. Saviour and several other nearby parishes, this article posits, as does Robert Charles Anderson, that they were his grandsons.^[3] Southwark records show a family group including Thomas Masters and his sons Abraham and Nathaniel. Thomas may have been John's oldest child.

¹ Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633*, vols. 1-3 (Boston: NEHGS, 1995), 1236.

² This marriage has been visible in published form since 1900 in *The Registers of the Abbey Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Bath*, Arthur John Jewers, ed., vol. 1 (London: The Harleian Society, 1900), 204.

³ This theory was probably first published in James Savage, *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England*, vol. 3 (Boston: 1861), 171. He supposes Abraham a son or grandson and Nathaniel a grandson (son of Abraham).

Parish registers

family of John Maisters

St. George the Martyr, Southwark, Surrey, England^[4]

?1602 20 June, baptism John Masters the s of John

?5 September 1615, burial John Masters (adult or child designations not noted in this register)

St. Saviour, Southwark, Surrey, England^[5]

1604 26 August, baptism Abraham Maisters s of John a tayler

1607 26 April, baptism Sara Maisters d of John a tayler

1609 9 April, baptism Nathaniel Maisters s of John a tayler

1609 1 October, burial Abraham Masters a childe

1611 12 September, baptism Abraham Maisters s of John a tayler

1612 3 September, burial, Abraham Maisters a childe

1612 17 September, baptism Elizabeth Maisters s of John a tayler

1614/5 12 January, baptism Martha Maisters twins dd of John a tayler

1614/5 12 January, baptism Mary Maisters twins dd of John a tayler

1615 16 November, burial Mary Maisters a childe

1615 30 December, burial Martha Maisters a childe

1616 28 May, burial Nathaniell Maisters a childe

1618 27 August, baptism Lydia Maisters d of John a tayler

?1624 29 December, marriage John Maisters & Jane Skinner by lic[ense]

?1626/7 5 January, burial John Maisters

1629 6 April, marriage Michael Dobinson & Sarah Masters by lic

family of Michael Dobinson/Dobison (St. Saviour)

1632 8 April, baptism John s of Michael Dobinson a spurrier

1634 23 October, baptism Thomas s of Michael Dobinson a spurrier

1636/7 2 March, baptism Elias s of Michael Dobinson a spurrier

1640/1 12 March, baptism Abraham s of Mihill Dobinson a spurrier

1641 19 September, burial Elias Dobinson infant

1646 4 June, baptism Michael s of Michael Dobison a spurrier

1646 18 June, burial Michael Dobison a chrysome

⁴ Registers of St George the Martyr, Southwark, Surrey (images on Ancestry.com).

⁵ Registers of St. Saviour, Southwark, Surrey (images on Ancestry.com, databases "St Saviour's, Denmark Park, 1571-1609," "Southwark Saint Saviour, Southwark 1609-1653").

1647 24 June, baptism Michael s of Michael Dobison a spurryer
1652 6 June, baptism Mary d of Michael Dobison a spurryer
1675 22 April, burial Sarah Dobbinson
?1680/1 2 March, burial Michael Dobbins

family of Thomas Maister/Maysters

St. Mary Magdalen, Southwark, Surrey, England^[6]

?1621/2 3 February, baptism Abraham the son of Thomas Masters (no occupations given in this register)

St. Saviour

1624 27 June, baptism Annah Maysters d of Thomas a stuffweaver
1626/7 7 January, baptism Nathaniell Maister s of Thomas a weaver
1629/30 14 March, baptism John s of Thomas Masters a weaver
1631 11 April, burial John Masters infant
1631 17 April, baptism Lidia d of Thomas Masters a weaver
?1633 12 September burial Lidia Masters
?1635 7 October marriage Thomas Masters & Adeny Bugaby
1636 18 August, baptism Thomas s of Thomas Masters a weaver
?1642/43 2 February, burial Thomas Masters infant^[7]

St. Lawrence Jewry, London, England^[8]

?1636/7 4 March, burial Thomas Masters, presumably an adult, children are usually designated as such with an appropriate term or named with a parent, only Masters in that parish

family of Abraham Masters

St. Thomas, Southwark, Surrey, England^[9]

1651 30 September, marriage Abraham Masters bachelor and Mary King widow both of Saviour's parish Southwark
1652 14 July, baptism Abraham, son of Abraham Masters carpenter
1653/4 1 January, burial Abraham Masters a man
1665 23 August, burial Mary Masters wife of Abraham a shipwright

⁶ Registers of St Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey, Surrey (images on Ancestry.com).

⁷ This is by far the most used term in this part of the register for children.

⁸ Registers of St. Lawrence Jewry, London (images on Ancestry.com).

⁹ Registers of St. Thomas, Southwark, Surrey (images on Ancestry.com).

St. Saviour parish sacramental token books (some years missing)^[10]

John Maisters/Masters/Mayster

?1596, (“Mastrits”), Fishmonger Alley, replacing James Welche
?1597, Fishmonger Alley, name crossed out, John Scales written in
1604-1605, New Churchyard
(1606-7, this neighborhood is missing from the records)
1608-1615, West Side
1616-1618, Saints Alley
1619-1629, Street Side (1626, replaced that year by Michael Dobbison)

Michael Dobbison/Dobyson/Dobson

1626 (replacing John Maisters)
1630-1641, Street Side
1642, Saints Alley
1643, no location, surname only, spurrier

Thomas Maisters/Masters

1622, Goat Yard, name inserted
1623, West Side
1624, West Side, crossed out, ffran Goldinge written in
1624, Goat Yard
1626-1636, Saints Alley
1637, Saints Alley, “gon” in margin
?1639-1641, Clink Liberty neighborhood

In the token books, there is sequential continuity in the names of residents and names of the alleys and lanes from year to year, showing the compiler went from building to building.^[11] John Maisters is in the same place between 1608 and 1629. In previous years he was very close, but apparently mostly out of the parish before 1604. His name is crossed out in the 1626 book and replaced with Michael Dobbison’s. Michael disappears from the books for the next three years and John reappears in the sequence up to 1629. Finally, Michael replaces John in the

¹⁰ “The Token Books of St Saviour Southwark,” London Metropolitan Archives, transcriptions and images at <https://tokenbooks.folger.edu/>.

¹¹ It should be noted that the blocks on the larger streets between the lanes and alleys are vaguely referred to, probably since they were very short, whereas the lanes and alleys are more numerous, longer and therefore had more residents. In the token lists given here, West Side and Street Side were the same thing, and refer to what was historically called Counter Street. Where Saints Alley appears, the compiler mistakenly absorbed the residents along a short block of Counter Street in which the Maisterses and Dobinsons lived into the Alley list.

sequence in 1630. The Dobbisons were there to at least 1642, the date of the last token book. John isn't listed elsewhere in the parish in 1626,^[12] but 1625 was a very bad plague year in London, so the Maisterses may have left the city temporarily. There is no token book for that year.

The books, a few of which are missing, include updated information. It isn't clear when updates were made, but names were crossed out when it was discovered they moved, probably mostly in the Spring when the tokens were delivered. This makes dating the changes vague. The number of communicants^[13] in John's household changed from two to three in 1613, three to four by 1626 and four to six in 1629. The 1622 and 1623 books identify communicant servants, and the Maisterses had one in those years, accounting for the third adult in the household after 1613, but Sarah Maisters became a required communicant the first Easter she was 16, which was in 1624. If there was still a family servant, the number should be four in that year. We don't have information for 1625. The number was four in 1626 before the cross-out and insertion of Michael Dobbison's name. The number continued to be four in 1627 and 1628. The six householders in 1629 could have been John, his wife, daughter Elizabeth, who had turned 16 the previous Fall, newlyweds Michael and Sarah, and a servant. Michael apparently assumed the rent for whatever accommodation the Maisterses had between the Spring of 1629 and the Spring of 1630. This adds to the evidence that John of Southwark was the same as John of Cambridge, who is thought to have immigrated in the Winthrop Fleet to New England.

The Winthrop Fleet sailed in Spring 1630. The first record of John in New England is a letter to Lady Joan Barrington on 14 March 1631, in which he says he was in Watertown, newly founded under Winthrop's leadership. He also says he was the trustee of Sir Richard Saltonstall, another prominent Fleet immigrant. Only one ship, unidentified by name, is known to have come to New England with immigrants between the last of the Fleet and March 1631, which also has no available passenger list.^[14]

Among John of Southwark's children, Abraham, Nathaniel, Martha and Mary died young. Sarah, Elizabeth and Lydia have no burial records in Southwark, and daughters with these names are the only children identified as such in John of Cambridge's will, supposedly dated 19 December 1639.^[15] Another legatee, "Sarah Dobyson," was logically the wife of Michael Dobbison/Dobinson, their marriage

¹² The burial of a John Maisters at St. Saviour early in 1627 could explain the deletion of his name in the 1626 token book. Since John reappears at this location from 1627 to 1630, the 1627 burial must have been for someone else, perhaps a son. See the text discussion about the marriage of John Maisters to Jane Skinner.

¹³ According to the background information on the token books, these were mostly persons over 16, who were required to attend church if able.

¹⁴ This was the *Handmaid*, landing at Plymouth in October 1630, *Winthrop's Journal "History of New England", 1630-1649*, James Kendall Hosmer, ed., vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 53.

¹⁵ *Suffolk County Wills: Abstracts of the Earliest Wills Upon Record in the County of Suffolk, Massachusetts* (Boston: NEHGS, 1984), 5.

being recorded at St. Saviour in 1629. In New England, Elizabeth Masters married Edmund Lockwood by about February 1631/2^[16] when Elizabeth of Southwark was about 19. Lydia Masters married Philip Taber by the time of John's will when Lydia of Southwark was about 21.

The biggest mystery among the records for John of Cambridge is the inclusion of Abraham and Nathaniel Masters in his will without giving any relationship to him. That they were sons or grandsons was posited as far back as Savage's *Genealogical Dictionary* in 1861.^[17] John specified Elizabeth, "Sarath" and "Lidya" as daughters and John Lockwood (son of Elizabeth by her first husband) a grandson. All but Elizabeth are named before Abraham and Nathaniel. If they were sons, custom would have them named first, specified as sons and the oldest of the two given a larger share than the others. Instead, Sarah, Lydia, John and Nathaniel were given £10, Abraham ten shillings and Elizabeth the remainder of the estate. John and Nathaniel were to have their portions invested to their advantage, so we can assume they were minors. John Lockwood's recorded birth in 1632 confirms this.^[18] Since Abraham and Nathaniel were the only legatees with the Masters surname, John may not have thought it necessary to clarify a relationship.

The names Abraham and Nathaniel Masters (variously spelled) are very rare in English parish records before the mid 17th century. There are Southwark records for both names, sons of Thomas Maisters/Masters. One record has Abraham baptized in 1622 at St. Mary Magdalene parish, adjacent to St. Saviour. Another has Nathaniel baptized at St. Saviour in 1627. The St. Saviour Thomas was a weaver and had other children baptized there between 1624 and 1636. He lived in the same neighborhood as John Maisters. The St. Mary Magdalene records don't include men's occupations. These Thomases were the only men with this name found in the St. Mary Magdalene and St. Saviour parish registers at the time. There is a Thomas in the sacramental token records for 1622, but not 1621. Since the token records are said to have been gathered about Easter and Abraham was baptized in February, the family may have moved shortly after the baptism. Given this and that John also named sons Abraham and Nathaniel, this leaves little doubt that Thomas and John were closely related. While they may have been brothers, the evidence more strongly suggests they were father and son. If so, it's reasonable that Thomas named his first two sons for his deceased brothers and his third son after his father.

No obvious burial record was found for Thomas, but there was a Thomas Masters buried at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, in 1637. This parish is about a mile north of St. Saviour across London Bridge. This may account for Thomas's entry in the 1637 token book with the note "gon," although there is no name replacing

¹⁶ Based on the birth of their son John the following November, see note 18.

¹⁷ This theory is popular and probably first published in James Savage, *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England*, vol. 3 (Boston: 1861), 171. He supposes Abraham a son or grandson and Nathaniel a grandson (son of Abraham).

¹⁸ November 1632, *Vital Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (Boston: 1915), 444.

his. No record was found of Thomas's family in St. Saviour parish after this. An interesting mention of a Thomas Maisters is in the 1633 will of John Hawlle of St. Saviour in which Thomas is designated one of eight poor men with families to receive a bequest.^[19]

The St. Thomas and St. Saviour records sketch a possible family and timeline for Abraham, son of Thomas: a marriage to widow Mary King in 1651, the baptism of a son in 1653 in which his father was named a carpenter, and a burial for an adult Abraham later that year. Mary, wife of Abraham, shipwright, was buried at St. Saviour in 1665. Since the name Abraham Masters was very uncommon and there is a direct correlation between "carpenter" and "shipwright," this appears to be the same family.

Abraham was about 17 when John of Cambridge wrote his will. Nathaniel was about 11. If their father was the Hawlle beneficiary he would have gotten a small amount of money, and if he died by 1639, the family would have been left destitute. In the scenario that Abraham the shipwright was his son, Adeny (Bugaby) Masters, his second wife, and Thomas, Jr., his last recorded child in 1636, Abraham would have started an apprenticeship about 1635 before his father died and would still have been one when John wrote his will. John may have sent money for the apprenticeship and then given him something extra in the will. Nathaniel may have come over as soon as his father died and became a ward in John's household. If Adeny and her son Thomas, Jr., were still alive, he was 3 at the time of the will and presumably under his mother's care. She would have no obligation, nor probably the means, to also support Nathaniel. It can only be speculated if Thomas's daughters Anna, baptized in 1624, and Lydia, baptized in 1631, were still alive in 1639. Their brother John has a burial record in St. Saviour records. Abraham's ten shillings may have been a nod to his being the oldest son of his oldest son rather than merely to his being a grandchild.

While there is no record of John Masters of Cambridge as a practicing tailor, Nathaniel Masters was,^[20] and there is ample evidence to connect him with John Masters's daughters. Only one Nathaniel Masters appears as an adult in 17th century New England.^[21] After John's will, the next record of one there was a land grant at Pequot (now New London), Connecticut Colony, on 16 February 1650, when Nathaniel of Southwark would have been 23.^[22] Cary and Elizabeth (Masters) Latham inherited the Masters homestead as part of the "residue" of John's estate. They sold this by 1645 and moved to Pequot.²³ Philip and Lydia (Masters) Taber

¹⁹ "The Parish of St Saviour, Southwark Some Wills of St Saviour Parishioners, 1558-1650," London Metropolitan Archives, transcription at <https://stsaviour.folger.edu/wills/wills-h.html>.

²⁰ Essex Co., MA, deeds, 3:42.

²¹ There was a Nathaniel Masterson who settled in York, Maine. Although Nathaniel of Manchester is referred to as Masterson several times and he lived in Wells, Maine, for many years, they were certainly different men.

²² Frances Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut* (New London: 1852), 60.

²³ 20 July 1645, *The Register Book of the Lands and Houses in the "New Towne" and the Town of Cambridge* (Cambridge, MA: 1896), 119. Pequot records are spotty at this time, but he was

moved to Pequot in 1651.^[24] This leaves little doubt that all of John's heirs were there at the same time except Sarah and Abraham. An Essex County, Massachusetts, court record says Nathaniel, who was by then living in Manchester, was charged with getting his wife pregnant in Pequot before marriage.^[25] She was Ruth Pickworth, and in the mid 17th century, the Pickworth family lived in Manchester.^[26] Ruth's father had a land grant in Pequot in 1651.^[27] The record is followed by an "f," meaning he forfeited the grant by not moving there. However, the family must have spent some time there. Nathaniel and Ruth evidently had children named Nathaniel, Abraham, Lydia and John, further supporting a link to John and Thomas Maisters/Masters of Southwark.^[28]

Essex County court records also have a deposition by Nathaniel on 4 February 1678 that says he was "about 47."^[29] If he was exactly 47, he was born between 4 February 1630 and 4 February 1631. A more reliable calculation can be made based on the date of his land grant in Pequot, at which point he must have been at least 21. This puts his birth before 16 February 1629, and accords better with Nathaniel, son of Thomas of Southwark, being baptized in January 1627. John died several years before Nathaniel Masters of Southwark was of apprentice age, but it's easy to imagine he was already familiar with some of the tailor's skills if he was the only

certainly there by February 1649, possibly as early as 1645. Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut*, 58-9.

²⁴ Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut*, 59, 70.

²⁵ *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts*, vol. 1 (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1911), 360. The case was referred to the CT General Court, which has no record of it.

²⁶ *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633*, 1463.

²⁷ Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut*, 77.

²⁸ Nathaniel and Ruth's children haven't been found published with explanations or sources for their parentage. They lived in Wells, Maine, before settling in Manchester, and this was the only Masters family of their generations in either places. An apprentice record for John of Wells names father "Nathall Masters" (*York Deeds*, vol. 2 (Portland, ME: 1887), 159). The baptism of Josiah and Lydia Littlefield's son Nathaniel says Nathaniel Marsters of Manchester was Lydia's father (*Records of the First Church in Beverly, Massachusetts, 1667-1772* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1905), 118). A Nathaniel Masters served from Wells in King Philip's War (*The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay*, vol. 8 (Boston: 1892), 635; George Madison Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War* (Boston: 1911), 107, 109). He may have been the child that was evidence of Nathaniel and Ruth "fornication." "Nathanill Maisters Senior" was fined for cursing in November 1676, inferring a younger one. (*Province and Court Records of Maine: York County, 1653-1679* (Portland, ME: 1928), 511). Abraham had a land grant in Wells (Edward Emerson Bourne, *The History of Wells and Kennebunk* (Portland, ME: 1875), 187; *York Deeds*, vol. 18 (Bethel, ME: 1910), 26) at the same time as John and eventually settled in Manchester with children Nathaniel and Ruth (*Vital Records of Manchester, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1903), 91).

²⁹ *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts*, vol. 3 (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1919), 106. Some ages given in these types of records are slightly to significantly wrong when compared with available primary records of births (Melinda Lutz Sanborn, *Ages from Court Records, 1636-1700. Volume I: Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk Counties, Massachusetts* (Genealogical Publishing Co., 2014).

male child living in John's household. His ten pounds would have allowed him to apprentice with a local tailor.

There are a few other disparate records for men named John Masters (variously spelled) in Southwark but connecting them would be highly speculative. It's interesting that a John Maysters married Jane Skinner at St. Saviour in 1624. If they were the New England immigrants, there should be a burial record between 1618 and 1624 for the mother of John's children. There are no obvious gaps in the parish records for St. Saviour through the pertinent time span, yet the record isn't there. There are no baptisms at St. Saviour with any John Maisters/Masters as the father between 1624 and 1630. The identity of the John Maisters buried at St. Saviour in 1627 must also be left to speculation. He may have been a son born after Thomas but before Abraham and it was he who married Jane Skinner. There is no obvious remarriage or burial record for Jane in Southwark, and this leaves the possibility that she was the Jane who died in Cambridge in 1639.

The only extant documentation of John's will is a transcription, the original not located. He refers to a wife, but not by name. She is assumed to have been the Jane Masters recorded dying in Cambridge on 10 December 1639, but this was before the will date.^[30] The only extant record of that is a contemporary Middlesex Co. copy. The original Cambridge vital records before 1694 are lost. Only her name and the date are given. Given the potential closeness in form of handwritten zeros and nines, one or the other of these records may have a transcription error. The most logical explanation is that the will was written on the 10th and Jane died on the 19th, but this would mean both the recorded days of her death and the will are wrong. As suggested, she may have been John's widowed daughter-in-law.

There is no clear evidence of how John Masters of Cambridge knew the Barrington family of Essex, England. His letter to Lady Joan shows their relationship was substantial.^[31] After apologizing for possibly fumbling with etiquette, he says "...haveing so much expreience of takeing in good part my rudenes [ignorance] in speakeing, I make bold to trouble you in writeing, but yor gret kindness and respect of mee, that am so unworthie...how I should in any measure requite it, but I know not how to doe it, but I pray you to except of the acknowledgment of all yor kindnesse, by way of thankfulnes and because you desire mee to write of this Country." "I have made bold to acquaint him [Sir Richard Saltonstall] wht the acquaintance of yor worps. [worships - the Barringtons]." "I may lay my selfe downe at their [her children and their spouses] feet, to doe them some service, for that extraordinary love & kindnesse and respect, that I received from my good Sr ffrancis and my good Lady, wch I feare I shall never be able to requite." The transcriber of the letter says he had "excellent handwriting,"^[32] so he

³⁰ "Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988," (images at Ancestry.com). Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins* (note 1), mentions this discrepancy and that she may have been another relative.

³¹ *Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632*, Arthur Searle, ed., (London: 1983), 183-4.

³² Agnes Bevill Tredcastle, "Letter from John Masters to Lady Barrington," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 91 (Boston: NEHGS, 1937), 69-71.

had at least some schooling. His repeated appearance in Massachusetts records with the prefix “Mr.” shows he had some status there. His will shows he was comfortable financially, making it plausible that, if Abraham Masters was his grandson, he paid for his apprenticeship. He may have taken his own family to Barrington House in Hatfield Broad Oak during the 1625 plague, accounting for at least some of his seemingly extraordinary feeling of indebtedness and his temporary disappearance from St. Saviour parish records.

The Barringtons had deep ties to the Puritan religious movement in England and were acquainted and associated with various members of the Puritan led Massachusetts Bay Company, under whose aegis the Winthrop Fleet sailed.³³ John’s letter was in response to Lady Joan’s request for information about the Massachusetts colony. He gave her a brief review and deferred to Saltonstall to give her more. She had asked her son John Barrington for news about the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629 before the Winthrop Fleet sailed. He wrote her a letter saying he had some news from Isaac Johnson, a member of the Company who eventually sailed with Winthrop.^[34] This letter was delivered to Lady Joan by “Mr. Masters.” John Barrington was recovering from a broken leg in Westminster, London,^[35] and Joan was staying with one of her daughters in Harrow Hill. If John Maisters of Southwark travelled the twelve or so miles to Harrow Hill, he would have gone over London Bridge and passed through Westminster. Sir Francis Barrington was also interested in news about Massachusetts. Gov. John Winthrop wrote to his son in December 1626 and asked him to make a “private” visit to Francis at the Marshalsea Prison in Southwark and “acquaint him how thinges have gone in our countrye.”^[36] Joan Barrington stayed with her husband while he was in prison, which was about six hundred feet from where the Maisterses lived.

Given the distance of about thirty miles as the crow flies between St. Saviour parish and Barrington House in Essex, the initial connection with the Barringtons was most likely established in Essex rather than Southwark. The extant baptism, marriage and burial records for Hatfield Broad Oak, excepting one year, don’t start until the mid-17th century, which could account for the missing records of at least John’s and his posited son Thomas’s marriages. They don’t appear in surrounding parishes, which do have earlier registers. Their parents may have been higher-level servants in the Barrington household, and the Masters children educated there. By the time Alice Masters, a single woman, wrote her will in 1693, she was a servant

³³ *Barrington Family Letters*, 11-24.

³⁴ *Barrington Family Letters*, 132-33.

³⁵ *Barrington Family Letters*, 19.

³⁶ “Papers of the Winthrop Family,” digital transcription, Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/winthrop/index.php/view/PWF01d227#sn=1337>.

At some point Francis was denied visitors, so Winthrop’s visit was likely clandestine.

with monetary assets in Sir John Barrington's household in Hatfield.^[37] He was a grandchild of Sir Francis and Lady Joan and heir to the estate.

When John first associated with Sir Richard Saltonstall is also a mystery. In England, Saltonstall was elected an assistant, along with Isaac Johnson, to Gov. Winthrop in the affairs of the Massachusetts Bay Company. In October 1629 he was appointed to the Company committee representing the intended emigrants to New England. He is thought to have been at home in Yorkshire through this planning period extending to at least 1 December 1639, since he isn't listed among the attendees at most of the meetings.^[38] The Fleet flagship *Arbella* left London on 30 March 1630 with Saltonstall on it. The assumption has been that John was Saltonstall's servant or employee and immigrated with him. This may be but given the large number of people in the Winthrop Fleet, Saltonstall didn't necessarily meet the Masterses before they left. We only know that when Saltonstall left the colony to return to England in March 1631, his two oldest but still underage sons remained, and John served as a trustee for the family. This included the considerable job of overseeing the Saltonstall farm in Watertown.

John's birth year can only be roughly estimated. He was the oldest of a group of men led by Winthrop who explored areas that are now in Waltham, Massachusetts.^[39] Winthrop was baptized in 1588. In *The Great Migration Begins*, a 1581 birth year is estimated for John based on a marriage that would accommodate a child born early enough to be the potential father of Abraham and Nathaniel.^[40] Given when Thomas Masters had his first child baptized and his posited birth about 1598, the year could be closer to 1575.

Genealogical summary

1. JOHN¹ MAISTERS/MASTERS was probably born in England by about 1575, died in Cambridge, Massachusetts Bay Colony, on 21 December 1639;^[41] married first an unidentified wife, perhaps second JANE, perhaps SKINNER, died in Cambridge supposedly on 10 (before John mentions her in his will), but possibly 19 December 1639 (after the will).

³⁷ Will of Alice Masters of Hatfield Broad Oak, 6 July 1693, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/415/200. Although there are references to Alice's relatives in her will and in a memorial stone in the Hatfield Broad Oak church, her baptism wasn't found in indexed records.

³⁸ Richard M. Saltonstall, *Ancestry and Descendants of Sir Richard Saltonstall* (Cambridge, MA: 1897), 55-58

³⁹ *Winthrop's Journal*, 73. The oldest and youngest were honored with land features named for them. Based on a geographic description (D. Hamilton Hurd, *History of Middlesex County*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: 1890), 322), "Masters Brook," which no longer runs, can be seen on the 1856 Walling map of Middlesex Co. just east of the town's asylum.

⁴⁰ Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins* [note 1].

⁴¹ *Vital Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (Boston: 1915), 654.

Children of John Maisters/Masters:

2. ?i. THOMAS MASTERS, b. abt. 1598
- ?ii. JOHN MASTERS, b. abt. 1601, perhaps bur. 5 Jan. 1626/7.^[42]
- iii. ABRAHAM MASTERS, bp. 26 Aug. 1604, bur. 1 Oct. 1609
3. iv. SARAH MAISTERS, bp. 26 Apr. 1607
- v. NATHANIEL MAISTERS, bp. 9 Apr. 1609, bur. 29 May 1616
- vi. ABRAHAM MAISTERS, bp. 12 Sep. 1611, bur. 3 Sep. 1612
4. vii. ELIZABETH MAISTERS, bp. 17 Sep. 1612
- viii. MARTHA MAISTERS, twin, bp. 12 Jan. 1614/5, bur. 30 Dec. 1615
- ix. MARY MAISTERS, twin, bp. 12 Jan. 1614/5, bur. 16 Nov. 1615
5. x. LIDIA MAISTERS, bp. 27 Aug. 1618

2. THOMAS² MAISTERS/MASTERS (*John*¹) was probably born in England about 1598, died after 18 August 1636, buried perhaps at St. Lawrence Jewry, London, on 4 March 1636/7; married perhaps first LIDIA, buried at St. Saviour on 12 September 1633, perhaps second at St. Saviour on 7 October 1635 ADENY BUGABY.

Children of Thomas and perhaps Lidia Maisters/Masters:

6. i. ABRAHAM MASTERS, bp. 3 Feb. 1621/2
- ii. ANNAH MAYSTERS, bp. 27 June 1624
7. iii. NATHANIEL MAYSTER, bp. 27 Jan. 1626/7
- iv. JOHN MASTERS, bp. 14 Mar. 1629/30, bur. 11 Apr. 1631
- v. LIDIA MASTERS, bp. 17 Apr. 1631

Child of Thomas and perhaps Adeny (Bugaby) Maisters/Masters:

- vi. THOMAS MASTERS, bp. 18 Aug. 1636, perhaps bur. 2 Feb. 1642/3

3. SARAH² MAISTERS/MASTERS (*John*¹) was baptized at St. Saviour on 26 April 1607, probably buried at St. Saviour on 22 April 1675; probably married at St. Saviour on 6 April 1629 MICHAEL DOBINSON/DOBISON. He was probably the “Michael Dobbins” buried at St. Saviour on 2 March 1680/1.

Children of Michael and Sarah (Maisters) Dobinson:

- i. JOHN DOBINSON, bp. 8 Apr. 1632
- ii. THOMAS DOBINSON, bp. 23 Oct. 1634
- iii. ELIAS DOBINSON, bp. 2 Mar. 1636/7, bur. 19 Sep. 1641
- iv. ABRAHAM DOBINSON, bp. 12 Mar. 1640/1
- v. MICHAEL DOBISON, bp. 6 June 1646, bur. 18 June 1646

⁴² Alternatively, bp. 20 June 1602, St. George the Martyr, Southwark. Another John was bur. there 15 Sep. 1615, suggesting there may have been an unrelated John Masters household in Southwark at this time.

vi. MICHAEL DOBISON, bp. 24 June 1647

vii. MARY DOBISON, bp. 6 June 1652

4. ELIZABETH² MAISTERS (*John*¹) was baptized at St. Saviour on 17 September 1612; married first in Watertown, Massachusetts Bay Colony, about 1632 EDMUND LOCKWOOD, probably second in Cambridge by November 1639 CARY LATHAM.^[43]

5. LIDIA² MAISTERS (*John*¹) was baptized at St. Saviour on 27 August 1618, died in Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island Colony, by 10 June 1669;^[44] married in Cambridge by December 1639 PHILIP TABER.

6. ABRAHAM³ MASTERS (*Thomas*², *John*¹) was baptized at St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey, Surrey, England, on 3 February 1621/2, probably buried at St. Saviour on 1 January 1653/4; probably married at St. Thomas, Southwark, Surrey, England, on 30 September 1651 MARY KING. She probably was buried at St. Thomas 23 August 1665.

7. NATHANIEL³ MASTERS (*Thomas*², *John*¹) was baptized at St. Saviour, 7 January 1626/7, died in Manchester, Essex County, Province of Massachusetts Bay, on 18 March 1707/8;^[45] married in Manchester abt. 1654 RUTH PICKWORTH.^[46]

⁴³ Their first known child was born in November 1639. *Vital Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the end of the year 1849* (Boston: 1915), 425.

⁴⁴ Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins* [note 1], 1792.

⁴⁵ As stated in his probate inventory, probate file 17833, *Essex County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1638-1881* (images at AmericanAncestors.org).

⁴⁶ John Pickworth's will names daughter Ruth Masters (*The Probate records of Essex County, Massachusetts*, vol. 1 (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1916), 428); Benjamin Pickworth's will names his brother Nathaniel Masters, Essex Co., MA, probate file 21849 (*Essex County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1638-1881*, images at AmericanAncestors.org)