

The English Origins of Thomas, Dina, Peter and Enoch Place of Dorchester and Boston, Massachusetts

by Doug Sinclair
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There have been theories in print about the family relationship of Massachusetts Bay Colony immigrants Thomas, Dina, Peter and Enoch Place and from where they came. References to them are scattered among numerous publications from the 19th to the late 20th centuries. Of Enoch, for instance, the *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island*, first published in 1887, says he "may have been a near relative of Peter Place of Boston and Thomas Place of Cambridge...The Dinah Place who died at Dorchester on 28:5:1657 may have been a first wife."¹ In an example of a personal genealogy published in 1993, "Thomas Place - freeman of Braintree 13 May 1640...We have no proof of the English origin of Thomas Place. However, there is an intriguing set of records in Stratford-upon-Avon, Co. Warwick...Thomas Pace was bap. there on 30 Nov 1596..."² The quality of research varies among the publications, most copying from those that came before.

The surname Place, with phonetic variations and combined with the forenames Thomas, Dinah, Peter and Enoch, was evidently very uncommon in late 16th and early 17th century England. This makes it notable that they all appear in parish records in the vicinity of Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire, England. This article is a thorough examination of the Hull area records, which confirm their relationships. The conclusion is that Peter and Isabella (Thornton) Place of Kirk Ella, Yorkshire, were the parents of Thomas, and Thomas and Dionis (Lyllewhite) Place were the parents of Peter and Enoch Place.

Parish register of Kirk Ella, Yorkshire³

1583 1 December, marriage Petrus Place et Isabella Thornton

1585 20 April, baptism Thoma filius Petri Place

1587 18 September, burial Petrus Place

1616/7 2 February, baptism Als filia Thoms Place

¹ John Osborne Austin, *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969), 154.

² Donald Everett Jones, Kathleen Kamm Jones, *Some Ancestors of Pearl Griggs Kamm, 1903-1988* (Madison, WS: 1993).

³ East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE 174/1, Kirk Ella Parish, General 1558-1696, at findmypast.co.uk, images 9, 10, 12, 24.

Parish register of Drypool, Yorkshire⁴

1608 16 August, baptism Susanna the daughter of Thomas Place
1609/10 3 February, baptism Elizabeth Place the daughter of Thomas Place
1614 14 April, baptism Francis the daughter of Thomas Place
1614 22 April, burial Emmett Place the wife of Thomas Place
1614 29 April, burial Francis the daughter of Thomas Place
1614 29 May, marriage Thomas Place and Dionis Lyllewhite
1614/5 1 March Peter the sonne of Thomas Place
1630/1 19 March, burial Anna the daughter of Thomas Place

Parish register of Beverley, Yorkshire⁵

1620 23 July, baptism Sarah Place ye daughter of Thomas Place
1625/6 29 January, baptism Ann Place ye daughter of Thomas Place

Parish register of Holy Trinity Church, Hull⁶

1629 4 September Enoch the sonne of Thomas Place

Bishop's transcripts of the parish register of Sculcoates, Yorkshire⁷

1630/1 19 March, burial [name unreadable] daughter of Thomas Place
1634, 1 November, burial Sarah the daughter of Thomas Playce

Anna Place and her unidentified sister buried in Drypool and Sculcoates respectively on what was very likely the same day poses a problem with no obvious answer. The two parishes are less than two miles away, but the situation is abnormal. The Sculcoates record is on part of a page with wear. Combined with the poor microfilm from which the image was taken, the first name isn't readable. Perhaps Anna's burial was recorded in both parishes.

If it weren't for the rarity of the surname Place in this part of Yorkshire, it could be a red flag that the places in which records were found for Thomas and his family are somewhat inconsistent. When his movements are traced both in time and place, it seems less so. Thomas was born in Kirk Ella. Records for his family between 1608 to 1615 are in Drypool, about six miles from Kirk Ella with Hull between

⁴ East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE 109/1/1, Drypool St. Andrew, General 1572-1710, at findmypast.co.uk, images 12, 13, 15, 16, 19.

⁵ East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE 1/1, Parish Register St. Mary's Beverley 1561-1638, at findmypast.co.uk, images 64, 66.

⁶ East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE 158/1, Holy Trinity, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials 1558-1653, at findmypast.co.uk, image 74.

⁷ East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE 46/1, Sculcoates All Saints, General 1538-1684, at findmypast.co.uk, images 4, 16 respectively.

them. They reappear in Kirk Ella for a baptism in 1617. Between 1620 and 1626 they were in Beverley, about eleven miles from Kirk Ella and Hull. Enoch was baptized in Hull in 1629 directly across the River Hull from Drypool. From 1631 to 1634 they were in Sculcoates, which is an adjacent parish to Hull. There are no records that tell us what Thomas did for a living, but it apparently didn't require him to be tied to any one parish.

There are several other contemporary clusters of Place records in the region of Hull. These were in Winterton, Lincolnshire, and Cottingham, Yorkshire, but they have no obvious connection to Thomas or his father. In Kirk Ella, Richard Place had a son Theophilus baptized in 1604, inferring a close relationship to Peter.

The female name "Emett," "Emmit," "Emmat," etc., is found occasionally in parish records in Yorkshire and is surely a colloquial variation of Emma. The female names "Dionis," "Dyones," "Dionisia," "Dynas," "Dynes," "Dynis," "Dinas," "Dianis," "Denis" and "Denys" are also found in Yorkshire. There is a lot of what could be described as "pigeon" Latin in English parish registers in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and all these forms were likely related. There are also spellings closer to "Emma" and "Dinah" in these registers, but spelling was obviously quite fluid, and it's not a stretch to say Dionis Lyllewhite of Yorkshire was Dina Place in New England, combined with the other evidence that supports it.

The only extant emigration record to New England of someone likely to have been from this family is Peter. A passenger list for the ship *Truelove* in 1635 includes Peter Place, age 20.⁸ His birth about 1615 and the rarity of the name leaves little doubt he was the son of Thomas and Dionis baptized in Drypool in 1615. Thomas, Dina, Peter and Enoch Place are the only people with these names on record living in the British Colonies in the mid 17th century. Enoch moved to Kings Town(e), now North Kingstown, Rhode Island. His great niece Joanna Place married Enoch's son Joseph Place.⁹ Peter's great granddaughter Dinah Place married Enoch's grandson John Place.¹⁰

Genealogical Summary

1. **PETER^A PLACE** of Kirk Ella, Yorkshire, England, who may have been born there before 1558 and was buried there on 18 December 1587. He married in Kirk Ella on 1 December 1583, **ISABEL/ISABELLA THORNTON**.

⁸ Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration, Immigrants to New England, 1634-1635*, Volume V, M-P (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2007), 475.

⁹ James N. Arnold, *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850*, vol. 5, part 1 (Providence: Narragansett Historical Publishing Co., 1895), 37.

¹⁰ *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850*, vol. 2, part 1 (1892), 149. While this Dinah may have been named for her great great grandmother, she was more likely named for her maternal aunt Dinah Steere.

The parish register for Kirk Ella in the 16th century is in Latin. "Isabella" was likely used for Isabel as "Petrus" and "Petri" were used for Peter. The register begins in 1558, so Peter and Isabel may have been baptized there before this. No record was found of Isabel's burial or a second marriage, but she may have been a sister of Joan, Frances and "Reonaldus" Thornton, daughters of William, baptized at Kirk Ella between 1563 and 1568. Alice, wife of William, may have been the mother of Joan and Frances. Her burial was on 7 July 1565, ten days after Frances's baptism.¹¹ The parish register of Cottingham, very close to Kirk Ella, has scattered entries for Thorntons and Places, but only little family groups can be determined from them, if any.¹² There is a marriage between "Jacobus" Thornton and "Margreta" Carwood in 1561, but no children's baptisms follow. Another Jacob had children baptized there between 1582 and 1589, including an "Esabella." Perhaps he was Isabel's brother. After another long gap, there is a Jacob Thornton marrying there in 1608 with no peripheral records to suggest a family group. Records that would do more to tie these records together may have been in the registers of adjacent parishes that are no longer extant. For example, the Willby register begins in 1601.

Child of Peter Place and his wife Isabel/Isabella Thornton:

2 i. THOMAS¹ PLACE, bap. Kirk Ella, 20 Apr. 1585.

2. THOMAS¹ PLACE (Peter^A) was baptized in Kirk Ella on 20 April 1585 and died perhaps in Dorchester, Massachusetts Bay Colony. He married 1. probably in Yorkshire, say 1607 EMETT (EMMA). Emmett was buried in Drypool, Yorkshire, on 12 April 1614. Thomas married 2. in Drypool on 29 May 1614 DIONIS (DINAH) LYLLEWHITE. Dionis probably was the Dina Place who died in Dorchester on 28 July 1657.¹³ No record was found of her baptism or a likely birth family. If she was in her mid 40s when she had her last child of record in 1629, her birth was about the same time as Thomas's. She may have been a widow when she married. The microfilm quality of the Drypool register is extremely poor as are some of the manuscript pages, leaving the possibility that answers might still be found there.

Thomas appears in New England records only three times. Given the rarity of the name and the consistent use of the spelling "Place," these undoubtedly refer to the same person. The first is when a Cambridge, Massachusetts Bay Colony, committee

¹¹ East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE 174/1, Kirk Ella Parish, General 1558-1696, at findmypast.co.uk, images 4, 5, 11 for all these records.

¹² East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service, PE2/1, Cottingham Parish, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1563-1653, at findmypast.co.uk.

¹³ "Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988," Ancestry.com image database online (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011), Dorchester>Births Marriages Deaths, 1646-1682, image 7 (manuscript p. 6), images of the original first volume of Dorchester vital records, "Dina Place deceased this life 28:5:1657."

inventoried the land holdings of George Willis in 1639.¹⁴ Willis had previously bought from Thomas Place “2 Acars of Land, bounded one [on] the Northeaft-Side, Edward Hall: one the Southweft end to ye weft End feild pale: the other fide one the Comon Northweft: the End being North Eaft; Joineing to ye greate Swampe.” The second is his appearance on a list of men taking the freeman’s oath on 13 May 1640.¹⁵ No towns of residence are given, and what residences can be otherwise determined for men on the list vary within the colony. The third is a land grant in what is became Braintree and is now Quincy, Massachusetts: “24th day of the 12th moneth, Feb. 1639[/40]...at the same Meeting there was granted to Thomas Place, of Mount Woollystone, for 5 heads, 20 Acrs there.”¹⁶ Five heads indicated five people in his household. These were most likely Thomas, Dinah, Peter (who had yet to marry), Enoch, age 10, and an unmarried daughter (Susannah, Elizabeth or Alice). No record was found of this land being sold.

As a freeman, Thomas would have been a member of a church. This may have been in Cambridge, where church records aren’t extant before 1658. He wasn’t a member at Boston church. Mount Wollaston was allowed to be a separate town from Boston at the General Court session of 13 May 1640, the same day Thomas became a freeman. This was about two and a half months after his land grant there, so the oft-printed assumption that he was in Braintree when he became free is credible.

Dinah Place died in Dorchester in 1657. Since Thomas’s records cluster in 1639-40, it’s likely Thomas died before Dorothy even though she is called his wife, not his widow. Their son Enoch married in Dorchester in 1657 when he was 28. Since there is no record of his buying property there, they, perhaps beginning with Thomas, may have been rented a house. Enoch and Sarah Place’s first two children were born in Boston before the family moved to what is now Rhode Island. They may have lived with his brother Peter of Boston, who was fourteen years older than Enoch. Enoch named his second child Peter. The first was Enoch and the third was Thomas. There are no Dinahs of record to show that either sons chose to honor their mother, but this wasn’t unusual. Numerous English and British Colonial parents chose not to name children for their grandparents contrary to the myth some people adhere to regarding naming “traditions.”

Children of Thomas Place (baptisms and burials in Drypool):

with his wife Emett:

¹⁴ *The register book of the lands and houses in the "New Towne" and the town of Cambridge* (Cambridge, MA: J.Wilson & Co., 1896), 65.

¹⁵ *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, vol. 1 (Boston:1853), 377.

¹⁶ "Boston Town Records," in *Second Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston*, 1877, vol. 2 (Boston, MA: Rockwell and Churchill, 1877), 49.

- i. SUSANNAH² PLACE, bp. 18 Aug. 1608. No further record.
- ii. ELIZABETH PLACE, bp. 3 Feb. 1609/10. No further record.
- iii. FRANCES PLACE, bp. 13 Apr. 1614, bur. 29 Apr. 1614.

with his wife Dionis/Dinah Lyllewhite:

- iv. PETER PLACE, bp. Drypool, Yorkshire, 1 Mar. 1614/5; d. by 7 Apr. 1675.¹⁷ He m. prob. Boston, MA Bay Colony, abt. 1642 ALICE, surname unknown.¹⁸
- v. ALS (ALICE) PLACE, bp. 2 Feb. 1616/7, Kirk Ella. No further record.
- vi. SARAH PLACE, bp. 23 July 1620, Beverley, Yorkshire; bur. 1 Nov. 1634, Sculcoates, Yorkshire.
- vii. ANN/ANNA PLACE, bp. 29 Jan. 1625/6, Beverley; bur. 1 Drypool (or Sculcoates?), 9 March 1630/1.
- viii. ENOCH PLACE, bp. 4 Sep. 1629, Hull, Yorkshire; d. prob. Kings Town (now North Kingstown), Colony of RI and Providence Plantations, betw. 30 May 1694 and 11 Sep. 1695.¹⁹ He m. in Dorchester, 5 Nov. 1657 SARAH, surname unknown.²⁰ There is no credible evidence for the published claims and speculations that Enoch came to Massachusetts as Atherton's servant or that Atherton was in any way his guardian.

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¹⁷ The date of his estate administration bond, Suffolk Co., MA, probate file 731.

¹⁸ Alice is named in most of her children's birth records. *Boston births, baptisms, marriages and deaths, 1630-1699* (Boston, MA: 1883), 13, 18, 24, 27, 30, 32, 36, 60.

¹⁹ The dates of his will and probate. Rhode Island State Archives, "Rhode Island Public Notary and Land Records," vol. 2 (1694-1708), 23-4. His will, written in May, says he was 64. If he was baptized in September 1629 as posited here, he was 65, which is a very small discrepancy.

²⁰ This marriage was performed by Maj. Humphrey Atherton, who had the unusual practice of either identifying brides by naming their fathers or just by their first name. Unfortunately, Enoch's marriage was one of the latter. "Massachusetts, U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988," Ancestry.com database online (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011), "Boston [sic], Transcript of County Records, 1643-1660; Vol. 1, Births, Marriages Deaths from 1630-1666," image 179 of p. 351-2.