

Some Background on
TOWNE GENEALOGY

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TOWNE FAMILY TREE

What I have done in this genealogy is to summarize information, in a different format, from a number of sources - The Descendents of William Towne 1630-1910 and The History of Kennebec County. This was furnished to me by my father-in-law, Dr. Charles Edwin Towne, of 5 Highland Avenue in Waterville, Maine. My wife is Mary Elizabeth Towne. Her brother is Dr. John William Towne of Cushman Road, Winslow, Maine.

William Towne, born around 1600 in Braceby, England, came to America in 1630. He and his wife Johanna Blessing had eight children: I Rebecca (1621-1692), II John (1624), III Susannah (1625), IV Edmund (1628-1678), V Jacob (1632-1704), VI Mary (1634-1692), VII Sarah () and VIII Joseph (1639-1713). The underlined years are the year baptized in Yarmouth England, which may be the birth year. Rebecca and Mary were both executed in Salem in 1692 as witches. Sarah narrowly escaped a similar death but records do not state how.

The bulk of the information in the following pages is on the three sons that married and had children (i.e. IV Edmund, V Jacob, and VIII Joseph). All of the information in the source from the first four generations is shown plus selected material from the above, and some recent data. There are over 900 families shown in the source.

You will note certain numbers in parenthesis in the attached genealogy (e.g. under IV-2 Thomas Towne, we have (5)). This means the information on Thomas Towne's children comes from reference "5" in the source: The Descendents of William Towne 1630-1910. Comparison of the attached nomenclature and that in the source follows. The superscript refers to the generation (e.g. Charles¹⁰ is the 10th generation).

<u>Source Material</u>	<u>Attached Material</u>	
William ¹ (1)		
Jacob ² (3)	V	The 5th child of William ¹
John ³ (9)	V-1	The 1st child of Jacob ²
John ⁴ (30)	V-1-10	The 10th child of John ³
Thomas ⁵ (77)	V-1-10-1	The 1st child of John ⁴
Ephraim ⁶ (169)	V-1-10-1-2 #	The 2nd child of Thomas ⁵
Ephraim ⁷ (358)	V-1-10-1-2-12	The 12th child of Ephraim ⁶
Edwin ⁸ (659)	V-1-10-1-2-12-6	The 6th child of Ephraim ⁷
Alvah ⁹	V-1-10-1-2-12-6-4	The 4th child of Edwin ⁸
Charles ¹⁰	V-1-10-1-2-12-6-4-2	The 2nd child of Alvah ⁹
John ¹¹	V-1-10-1-2-12-6-4-2-2	The 2nd child of Charles ¹⁰
Nathan ¹²	V-1-10-1-2-12-6-4-2-2-2	The 2nd child of John ¹¹

#married the daughter of Martha Moore Ballard(subject of "A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard" by Pulitzer Prize Winner: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich)

I have also done a lot of genealogical research tracing the roots of my greatgrandfather, Martin Sondergeld, and his third wife, my great grandmother Anna Barbara Hagemann. They came to America in the mid 1800's from Unterhaun outside Bad Hersfeld in Hesse, West Germany.

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INTRODUCTION to TOWNE GENEALOGY

The book "Towne Genealogy 1630-1901" was compiled and published by Edwin Eugene Towne in 1901 and printed by Samuel Usher of Boston, Massachusetts.

Don Sondergeld, married to Mary Elizabeth Towne of Waterville, Maine, compiled a summary in 1988.

Mary's brother Dr. John William Towne <JWTowne@adelphia.net> lives in Winslow, Maine.

Rebecca Towne, the oldest child was born in England in 1621. Her father, William, and her mother, Joanna Blessing, plus 4 or 5 children, sailed to Boston, MA around 1632. They lived in Topsfield, near Salem.

Rebecca married a good man, Francis Nourse, and lived on a farm in Salem. The farmhouse is now a museum. They had many children, owned much land, were caring, and religious. People respected them.

Rebecca gardened and gathered herbs to make medicines to heal people. When she was 72, some girls in Salem had learned about witchcraft and dancing from a servant named Tabitha.

Many people in the village were accused of being witches, like flying through the air, putting spells on people, and making cows sick. Many people believed these girls, as did the minister of the church and most importantly, Cotton Mather, the judge.

Rebecca and her sisters, Mary and Sarah, were accused of being witches. Sarah escaped to Maine, but Rebecca and Mary were hung with many others. Later they were buried in one grave. (More on Rebecca and a letter from Mary Towne Estey written before she was hung plus info from her trial.)

Several years later, the people of Salem realized that they had been very wrong. They reburied the hanged people and had a church service to praise them as being very good.

There is a library on Newbury Street in Boston that has a lot of information on the Towne family, as they were early settlers in Massachusetts. There is also a General Salem Towne house at Sturbridge Village.

The Pulitzer Prize winning book: "A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary 1785-1812" by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is the diary of Mary Sondergeld's great great great great grandmother. One of Martha's daughters, Lucy Ballard, married Ephraim Towne(5/26/1754-5/20/1837) and lived in Winslow, Maine on the "Towne Homestead".

WILLIAM TOWNE & JOANNA BLESSING
(1600-1672) (-1682)

Born around 1600 in Braceby, England. Probably the son of Richard and Ann Towne. William and Joanna were married on 3/25/1620 at the Church of St. Nicholas in Yarmouth, England. The earliest we find the Towne name in America is 1635 when William was an inhabitant of Cambridge, MA. William purchased land in Salem, MA in 1640 and resided in that section called "Northfields". In 1651 he purchased land in Topsfield, MA and moved there. In 1652, he sold his Salem property and purchased additional land in Topsfield. Dates underlined are baptismal dates rather than dates of birth. The first six of their eight children were born in England and baptized in Yarmouth, England. See <http://www.pearllakehist.com/witch>

I Rebecca Towne (2/21/1621-7/19/1692) & Francis Nourse (-11/22/1695) Rebecca was hanged in Salem, MA as a witch and was the first to be brought before the magistrates on 3/24/1692. The Reverend Hale of Beverly, opened the Court with prayer, after which the accusations were read, all of which Rebecca denied, earnestly asserting her innocence of anything wrong, but was committed to prison. She was tried on 6/30/1692. After the condemnation, the governor granted a reprieve, which when known to his accusers, they renewed their outcries. This caused a number of Salem gentlemen to prevail upon the governor to recall the reprieve. The communion day previous to her execution she was taken in chains to the meeting house where she was formally excommunicated by her minister, Mr. Noyes. She was executed 7/19/1692. In 1712 the church to which she belonged reversed its censure by blotting out the record of her excommunication that it might not be a reproach to her memory and occasion of grief to her children.

About 150 were accused as witches and thrown into prison. After persons suffered death by hanging on Gallows Hill in Salem, MA. House and graveyard in Danvers, MA is open to the public.

VI Mary Towne (8/24/1634-9/22/1692) & Isaac Estey ()

She was arrested 4/22/1692, tried on 9/9/1692 and executed as a Salem witch 9/22/1692. During the 5 months she was in prison, her husband came from Topsfield, MA twice every week to render his injured but deserving companion the trifling comfort his means could allow. A modern writer says "Mary Estey was a woman of great strength of mind and sweetness of disposition."

The parting scene between this excellent woman and her husband, children, and friends was, as is reported by those present, as serious, religious and affectionate as could well be witnessed, drawing tears from the eyes of all present. To complete this awful tragedy, Reverend Mr. Noyes alluded to her body in connection with others as they hung upon the gallows as "fire brands of hell". While in jail she wrote the following petition:

To the honorable judge and bench now sitting in Salem, and the Rev. Ministers, this petition showeth that your humble, poor petitioner, being condemned to die, doth humbly beg of you to take it into your judicious and pious consideration that your petitioner knowing my innocence, and blessed by the Lord for it, and seeing the wiles and subtlety of my accusers, by myself cannot but judge charitably of others who are going the same way as myself, if the Lord step not mightily in. I was confined a whole month on the same account that I am now condemned, and then cleared, as your honors know, and in two days' time I was cried out upon again and have been confined, and am now condemned to die. The Lord above knows

my innocence then, and likewise does now, as at the great day will be known by men and angels. petition to your honors not for my own life, for I know I must die, and the appointed time is set, but if it be possible, that no more innocent blood be shed, which undoubtedly cannot be avoided in the way and course you go in.

I question not but your honors do to the utmost of your powers in the discovery and detection of witchcraft and witches and would not be guilty of innocent blood for the world, but by my own innocence, I know you are in the wrong way. The Lord in his infinite mercy direct you in this great work, that innocent blood be not shed. I humbly beg of your honors that you would be pleased to examine some of those afflicted persons and keep them a part sometime, and likewise try some of those confessing witches, I being confident several of them have belied themselves and others, as will appear, if not in this world, in the world to come, whither I am going, and I question not but your honors will see an alteration in these things. They say myself and others have made a league with the devil. We cannot confess.

I know and the Lord knows, as will shortly appear, that they belie me, and I question not but they do others. The Lord above knows, who is the searcher of all hearts, as I shall answer at the tribunal seat, that I know not the least thing of witchcraft, therefore I cannot, I dare not belie my own soul. I beg your honors not to deny this my humble petition from a poor, dying, and innocent person, and I question not but the Lord will give a blessing on your endeavors.

Mary Estey

EXAMINATION OF MARY EASTY, APRIL 22, 1692

The examination of Mary Eastie.

At a Court held at Salem village 22.Apr. 1692

By the Hon. John Hathorne & Jonathan Corwin.

At the bringing in of the the accused severall fell into fits.

Doth this woman hurt you? [EXAMINERS' NOTE: Many mouths were stopt, & several other fits seized them Abig: Williams said it was Goody Eastie, & she had hurt her, the like said Mary Walcot, & Ann Putman, John indian said her saw her with Goody Hobbs.] What do you say, are you guilty?

EASTY: I can say before Christ Jesus, I am free.

You see these accuse you. There is a God-- Hath she brought the book to you? Their mouths were stopt. What have you done to these children?

E: I know nothing.

How can you say you know nothing, when you see these tormented, & accuse you that you know nothing? Would you have me accuse my self?

E: Yes if you be guilty.

How far have you complied w'th Satan whereby he takes this advantage ag't you?

E: Sir, I never complied but prayed against him all my dayes, I have no compliance with Satan in this. What would you have me do?

Confess if you be guilty.

E: I will say it, if it was my last time, I am clear of this sin.

Of what sin?

E: Of witchcraft.

Are you certain this is the woman?

[EXAMINERS' NOTE: Never a one could speak for fits. By and by Ann Putman said that was the woman, it was like her, & she told me her name; It is marvailous to me that you should sometimes think they are bewicht, & sometimes not, when severall confess that I never knew? Her hands were clincht together, & then the hands of Mercy Lewis was clincht Look now you hands are open, her hands are open. Is this the woman? They made signes but could not speak, but Ann Putman afterwards Betty Hubbard cryed out Oh, Goody Easty, Goody Easty you are the woman, you are the woman Put up her head, for while her head is bowed the necks of these are broken.]

What do you say to this?

E: Why God will know.

Nay God knows now.

E: I know he dos.

What did you think of the actions of others before your sisters came out, did you think it was Witchcraft?

E: I cannot tell.

Why do you not think it is Witchcraft?

E: It is an evil spirit, but wither it be witchcraft I do not know,

[EXAMINERS' NOTE:Sevrall said she brought them the Book and then they fell into fits.]

Salem Village March 24'th. 1691/2.

Mr Sam'l parris being disired to take in wrighting the Examination of Mary Eastie hath delivered itt as aforesaid

Upon heareing the aforesaid, and seeing what wee then did see, together with the Charge: of the persons then present Wee Committed s'd. Mary Easte to their Majest's Goale

John Hathorne }

} Jonathan. Corwin }

[SALEM TRIALS HOMEPAGE](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_EASX.HTM)

http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_EASX.HTM

May 15, 2001

Dear Ryan,

Opa is sending you some of the Towne genealogy that he has condensed from the printed Towne Genealogy. I am adding some of the tale from "Trending into Maine" a book by Kenneth Roberts, which you probably can find in the Sudbury Library.

I don't know why the Towne's came to this country in the 1630's but I can guess they were looking from freedom to worship as they chose and because there was little opportunity at that time in England. You are the 13th generation from William Towne and Joanna Blessing. They had eight children and I imagine that Joanna was pregnant when they crossed the ocean in a small ship (if you have ever seen the Mayflower you can guess how crowded and small their space was). They came to Cambridge but in 1640 they bought land in Salem and they seemed to prosper there. William's oldest daughter was Rebecca Towne who married Francis Nourse and then settled in the house that is now a museum, and open to the public. I think that it may be in Topsfield. You may have been there. Rebecca and her two sisters were all tried as witches. BUT, although Mary and Rebecca were hung, Sarah who was married to Peter Cloyse escaped and moved to SUDBURY.

I will quote from "Trending into Maine".

"Rebecca Towne, baptised Feb.21, 1621 married Francis Nourse of Salem, she was executed for witchcraft on July 19, 1692 having been acquitted on her first trial, but later rearrested and convicted, her attitude throughout demonstrating the highest nobility of character.

Mary Towne, bapt. August 24, 1634; married Issac Eastey, son of Jeffrey Estey of Salem, executed for witchcraft Sept.22, 1692, her petition to the court being the outstanding note of high fortitude and understanding charity which has come down to us from Salem's black days.

Sarah Towne, bapt. Sept.3, 1648; married (1) Edmund Bridges; (2) Peter Cloyse; accused of witchcraft in 1692, primarily because of her courageous protest against blackening of her sister's name by the Salem Village Clergyman, Mr. Parris, but escaped execution and removed to Sudbury.

You may find reference to the Cloyse Family in Sudbury, but you can read the story in "Trending into Maine" starting on page 95. You may also go to the New England Genealogical society on Newbury Street in Boston.

I'm sure that you have been to Plymouth Plantation and to the Paul Revere house, that should help you picture how they lived. I think it quite interesting to read about the family. However, just remember they really were not witches just good women, who were victimized by some very bored teenaged girls and a voodoo woman named Tabitha.

Good luck,

Love

Nanna