

John Ramsdell, John Ravensdale, Isaac Johnson, and Nathaniel Turner

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This article presents evidence to show that John Ramsdell, who was in Lynn, Massachusetts, from about 1631 to his death in 1688, was the same man as John “Ravensdale,” who was made a freeman of Massachusetts Bay on 6 May 1635, and had been named in the 1627 will of Isaac Johnson as a servant. Johnson also mentioned “cosen Nathanaell Turner” in the will. Turner can be identified as Captain Nathaniel Turner of Lynn and later of New Haven, Connecticut, whose servant about 1632 was John Ramsdell.

John Ramsdell of Lynn

John¹ Ramsdell lived in Lynn from at least 1631 until his death on 27 August 1688, and was the father of at least eight children.^[1] Two statements of his age exist: one in a court deposition,^[2] the other his age at death. Neither inspires great trust, but both happen to agree on a birthdate in late 1601 or early 1602. The given name of his wife, Priscilla, is known only from the record of her death in Lynn on 23 January 1675/6.^[3] She is also mentioned, but not named, in a 12 April 1675 deed of gift where John transferred his farm and land in Lynn to his son Aquila.^[4] Nowhere is her age or her maiden surname given.

John Ramsdell was first definitely recorded as a member of a quarterly court jury in 1638,^[5] but he had been in Lynn for several years already. We know this because in 1673 he testified that he had been familiar with the Lynn-Marblehead road for forty-two years, thus since 1631.^[6] Also, in 1657 he deposed that “twenty-five years ago [i.e., in 1632], when he was a servant of Captain Torner, his master and other inhabitants of Lynn, before it was a town, fenced in Nahant” and “That by reason of these householders fencing, they had put their cattle there without molestation all these years.”^[7] Nahant is

¹ *Vital Records of Lynn, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849*, 2 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1905–1906), 2:573. The best previous treatment of John Ramsdell and his descendants, though it has been partly superseded by research currently underway, is Roselyn Listernick, “John Ramsdell of Lynn, Massachusetts,” *The Essex Genealogist* 10 (1990):25–32, 79–84, 213–216; 11 (1991):44–46.

² *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts*, 9 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1911–1975), 2:43.

³ *Vital Records of Lynn* [note 1], 2:573.

⁴ Essex County Deeds, 5:64. See also Ian Watson, “The Origins of Aquila Ramsdell’s Given Name: Investigating the 17th Century with Mitochondrial DNA,” *American Ancestors* 18:2 (Summer 2017):54–56.

⁵ *Records and Files* [note 2], 1:7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:183–184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:43.

the peninsula extending from Lynn into the sea, and is only about a hundred yards wide at its narrowest point.

Nathaniel Turner

Nathaniel Turner, John Ramsdell's master, was a prominent colonist who was at Lynn in the 1630s, was later involved with the New Haven Colony, and was lost at sea in 1646. He had a wife, whose name is not recorded, and children.^[8] His title came when he was made "captain of the military company at Saugus" on 4 March 1633/4.^[9] His English origins have been considered unknown.^[10]

John Ravensdale of Lynn

A John Ravensdale became a freeman of Massachusetts Bay on 6 May 1635 together with known Lynn men.^[11] Genealogists dating back to Savage have thought of Ravensdale as a surname distinct from Ramsdell, and have treated John Ravensdale of Lynn as completely separate from John Ramsdell of Lynn. Thus Robert Charles Anderson created a profile for John Ravensdale in *The Great Migration Begins and The Winthrop Fleet*, neither of which mentions John Ramsdell.^[12] Roselyn Listernick's article on John Ramsdell does not mention John Ravensdale.^[13]

John Ravensdale, Servant to Isaac Johnson

On 20 April 1627, Isaac Johnson of Boston, Lincolnshire, a wealthy young man soon to become a prominent member of the Massachusetts Bay Company, left a small bequest of three pounds to "my servant" John Ravensdale in the earliest of his extant wills.^[14] While nothing directly links this John Ravensdale to the one who became a freeman in Lynn in 1635, Robert Charles Anderson's opinion in *The Great Migration Begins* was that it "would not be surprising"

⁸ On Nathaniel Turner's life, the best source is Robert Charles Anderson, *The Winthrop Fleet: Massachusetts Bay Company Immigrants to New England, 1629–1630* (Boston: NEHGS, 2012), 639–643. An earlier version of this is in Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins*, 3 vols. (Boston: NEHGS, 1995), 3:1847–1850. For Turner's descendants, see Donald Lines Jacobus, *Families of Ancient New Haven*, 8 vols. (Rome, N.Y., and West Haven, Conn., the author, 1922–1932), 8:1866 et seq. Another sketch, shorter but readable, is in Oliver Ayer Roberts, *History of the Military Company of the Massachusetts, Now Called the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts*, 4 vols. (Boston: A. Mudge & Son, 1895–1901), 1:33–34.

⁹ Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 vols. in 6 (Boston: W. White, 1853–1954), 1:112.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 639.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 554; Shurtleff, *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay* [note 9], 1:371.

¹² Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 8], 3:1551; Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 554–555.

¹³ Listernick, "John Ramsdell of Lynn" [note 1], *The Essex Genealogist* 10:25 et seq.

¹⁴ *Winthrop Papers*, 6 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929–2005), 2:49–56, with the bequest to Ravensdale at 53. On Johnson's multiple wills, see 2:49 and Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 412–414.

if these two John Ravensdales were the same person,^[15] and in *The Winthrop Fleet* he linked the two records together in a single sketch.^[16]

Isaac Johnson

Isaac Johnson and his wife, Lady Arbella Fiennes, both came to Massachusetts with the Winthrop Fleet in 1630 but died later that year. Johnson had sent cattle and a party of servants to New England in 1629, in advance of his own arrival.^[17] Isaac Johnson came from a wealthy, although not titled, family, and had links to several places in Lincolnshire and Rutland in England. Stamford in Lincolnshire was his parents' native town, where they were married, and where he was baptized in 1601.^[18] North Luffenham in Rutland was where his grandfather served as parson and died in 1625.^[19] Boston in Lincolnshire was described as his residence in his 1627 will.^[20] Sempringham in Lincolnshire was where his wife Arbella's family had built a manor house on the site of a dissolved monastery.^[21] Arbella's father was Thomas, 3rd Earl of Lincoln, who also owned Tattershall Castle about 20 miles north of Sempringham.^[22] In July 1629 Isaac Johnson was at Sempringham when he wrote to Emmanuel Downing inviting him and John Winthrop there for a meeting to plan the Massachusetts Bay settlement.^[23]

¹⁵ Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 8], 3:1551.

¹⁶ Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 554–555.

¹⁷ On Johnson generally, see Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 411–415. For further reading on Johnson, see Michael J. Canavan, “Isaac Johnson, Esquire, the Founder of Boston,” in *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 27 (1932):272–285, which focuses on his time in New England; E. A. Irons, “Isaac Johnson: A Memoir,” *The Rutland Magazine and County Historical Record* 3 (1907–08):78–87; and H.C.G. Mathew and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 30:270.

¹⁸ Isaac Johnson was baptized at St. John, Stamford, Lincolnshire, 1 or 5 July 1601 (*England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975*, database at familysearch.org. Bishop's Transcripts say 1 July [FHL 0,505,741], while the parish register says 5 July [FHL 1,450,474]). He was the son of Abraham and Anna (Medowes) Johnson, who were married there 9 October 1600 (*England Marriages 1538–1973*, database at familysearch.org; Bishop's Transcripts [FHL 0,505,741]). See also William Page, ed., *Victoria History of the Counties of England: Rutland*, vol. 1 (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1908), 263; Joseph Jackson Howard, *Miscellanea Genealogical et Heraldica*, new series, vol. 1 (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1874), 450–451.

¹⁹ John Drakard, *The History of Stamford, in the County of Lincoln* (Stamford, Lincs.: the author, 1822), 451, 454–45; George John Armytage, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Rutland in the Year 1618–19*, Publications of The Harleian Society, vol. 3 (London: Harleian Society, 1870), 14.

²⁰ *Winthrop Papers* [note 14], 2:49.

²¹ Paul Cope-Faulkner, *Sempringham: Village to Priory to Mansion* (n.p.: Heritage Lincolnshire, 2011). See also Rose Graham, *S. Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines* (London: Elliot Stick, 1901), 204–205.

²² Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 414; G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*, 13 vols. (London: St. Catherine Press, 1910–1959), 7:695–696. The male line of the Earls of Lincoln had been called Clinton otherwise Fiennes, and descendants appear as Fiennes and/or Clinton. See also Meredith B. Colket, “The New England Children of Theophilus, Earl of Lincoln,” *The American Genealogist* 15 (1938):122–125, whose title mistakenly gives Thomas, the third earl, the name of his son Theophilus, the fourth earl; and “The Family of the Earl of Lincoln . . .,” *The American Genealogist* 20 [1942]:46–48.

²³ *Winthrop Papers* [note 14], 2:102–103.

Evidence That John Ramsdell and John Ravensdale Were the Same Man

In 1997 Mary Ellen Wright, a Ramsdell descendant, noticed the John Ravensdale profile in *The Great Migration Begins* and began to suspect that it might refer to the same person as John Ramsdell. One initial thought was that Ravensdale might simply be a mistranscription of Ramsdale (a variant of Ramsdell). She examined the handwritten original of Johnson's will, which, however, definitely reads Ravensdale. She was not able to locate the original freemen's lists and she put the question aside at the time.^[24]

In 2016, the author revisited the problem while carrying out research on the Ramsdell family for Mary Ellen Wright, but found only the thinnest thread of evidence directly connecting John Ramsdell to John Ravensdale. It turned out, though, that a stronger web connects John Ramsdell to Nathaniel Turner, Turner to Isaac Johnson, and Johnson to John Ravensdale. This evidence, described in four points below, allows us to reach new and useful conclusions about the relationships between these men.

(1) *John Ravensdale's freemanship and John Ramsdell's jury service*

On 27:1:1638 (i.e., 27 March 1638), John Ramsdell served on a jury at the Essex Quarterly Court in Salem for the first of eleven recorded times.^[25] The 1638 jury consisted of twelve men. Of these, the other eleven all had been made freemen of Massachusetts Bay Colony at some point prior to their jury service.^[26] Early records of freemanship in Massachusetts are relatively complete.^[27] If we maintain the belief that John Ramsdell was not John Ravensdale, he would be the only jurymen who had not been made a freeman, despite having been in Lynn since at least 1631. The more likely conclusion is that John Ramsdell had been made a freeman in 1635 under the name of John Ravensdale.

(2) *John Ramsdell's involvement with cattle on Nahant*

²⁴ Mary Ellen Wright to Jonathan Galli of NEHGS, 5 August 1997, and Jonathan Galli to Mary Ellen Wright, 2 October 1997; photocopy of the original will, held by Mary Ellen Wright, likely obtained from the Winthrop Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁵ *Records and Files* [note 2], 1:7; the subsequent ten jury appearances are at 1:26, 89, 153, 169; 2:59, 124, 224; 3:6, 73, 321. It is interesting to note that the members of the court present on 27 March 1638 included John Humphreys (Isaac Johnson's wife's sister's husband), Roger Conant (a distant relative of Johnson by marriage; see Robert Charles Anderson, "The Conant Connection: Part Two . . ." *Register* 148 (1994):114, 127), and Captain [Nathaniel] Turner, John Ramsdell's former master.

In the first appearance (*Records and Files* 1:7) he was called John Ramsden, as he also was in two later court records: in November 1663 (3:117) and in November 1668 (4:86, with [his son] Aquila Ramsden). Dr. George Redmonds, an expert on English surnames, has confirmed that Ramsden for Ramsdell was a typical variant for the time (email from Robert Charles Anderson to the editor, dated 13 February 2017; see also George Redmonds, *Dictionary of Yorkshire Surnames* [Donington; Shaun Tyas, 2015], 600).

²⁶ Shurtleff, *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay* [note 9], 1:79, 366 (Woodbury); 1:80, 36 (Leech); 1:79, 366 (Palfrey); 1:369 (Massy); 1:369 (Davenport); 1:374 (Venner); 1:368 (Norton); 1:369 (Rednap); 1:372 (Lightfoot); 1:373 (Parker); 1:369 (Hedges).

²⁷ On freemanship see Robert Charles Anderson, "Focus on Massachusetts Bay Freemen," *Great Migration Newsletter* 10:2 (April-June 2001):11-14.

In 1657, Thomas Dexter sued the town of Lynn, claiming title to the Nahant peninsula.^[28] Dexter lost the case, but it was reopened by his heirs in 1678.^[29] Many long-time Lynn residents were called to testify, among them John Ramsdell (as mentioned above).

One of the deponents was William Dixey. In two depositions in 1657 and 1680[/81], Dixey described his arrival in New England and his early involvement with Lynn and Nahant. He explained that Isaac Johnson had been his master, and mentioned what appears to have been correspondence between Isaac Johnson and Governor John Endicott at Salem about where an advance party of colonists should settle. Dixey “and the rest of his Master’s company” came to New England in June 1629 and with Endicott’s apparent approval eventually settled at Saugus (as Lynn was then called). They cut grass for their cattle, which they kept on Nahant.^[30] Another deponent in the Dexter lawsuit, John Sibley (a servant of Richard Saltonstall), also referred to “Mr. Johnson’s” cattle having been kept on Nahant twenty-eight years previously to 1657, i.e., in 1629.^[31] It is helpful to keep in mind that for the first few years after Lynn was inhabited in 1629, its residents were predominantly servants and their masters rather than families.^[32]

William Dixey, who later settled in Beverly, was born about 1607 and died between 1688 and 1690.^[33] William Dixey’s English origins have been unknown beyond the fact that he was Isaac Johnson’s servant and was possibly related to Thomas Dixey, who was in Salem by 1637.^[34] A potential clue to William Dixey’s family is that Isaac Johnson, in his 1627 will, left thirty pounds to “my servant Robert Dyxie,” citing his “faithfull service.” It is promising that from 1628 to 1630 a marriage for a Robert Dixie and two baptisms for his daughters were recorded at St. Botolph’s in Boston, Lincolnshire, where Isaac Johnson resided in 1627.^[35] There are Dixey records in this parish stretching back into the 1500s, including the marriage of a William Dicsey and Alice Cressey on 19 January 1584/5,^[36] but no baptism which would match William Dixey of Beverly.

The testimony of William Dixey and John Sibley tells us that servants of Isaac Johnson kept cattle on Nahant in 1629. Meanwhile, John Ramsdell reported that three years later — after Johnson’s death in 1630 — he helped to fence Nahant for cattle for a different master, Nathaniel Turner. This does not by itself prove that John Ramsdell had previously been a servant to Isaac Johnson, but it does prepare a stage on which such a hypothesis can reasonably be set

²⁸ *Records and Files* [note 2], 2:34; on Thomas Dexter generally, see Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 8], 1:540–545.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7:124.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7:127; Essex County Deeds, 5:107. The testimony is abstracted in Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 607.

³¹ *Records and Files* [note 2], 7:129.

³² Robert Charles Anderson, “The Beginnings of Lynn Re-Examined,” *The Essex Genealogist* 10 (1990):177–185.

³³ Anderson, *Great Migration Begins* [note 8], 1:553–557; Walter Goodwin Davis, *Massachusetts and Maine Families in the Ancestry of Walter Goodwin Davis, 1885–1966*, 3 vols. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1996), 1:420–427.

³⁴ Davis, *Massachusetts and Maine Families* [note 33], 1:421, says that Thomas and William were “without doubt” related, but does not explain further.

³⁵ F. Besant and C. W. Foster, *The Parish Registers of Boston in the County of Lincoln*, 2 vols., Publications of the Lincoln Record Society, Parish Register Section, vols. 1, 3 (Lincoln 1914–1915), 2:136, 140, 148.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:20.

forth. When we see that a John Ravensdale was a servant to Johnson in 1627 in England, this hypothesis becomes much more plausible.

(3) *Onomastic evidence*

John Ramsdell named a son Isaac.^[37] Although the Ramsdell children's birthdates are not certain, Isaac was probably John's oldest son.^[38] If John Ramsdell and Johnson's servant John Ravensdale were the same person, Isaac would have been named for his father's recently deceased master and (at least intended) benefactor.

(4) *Isaac Johnson had a relative named Nathaniel Turner*

Buried towards the end of Isaac Johnson's 1627 will is a bequest of five pounds "to my cosen Nathanaell Turner."^[39] No researcher seems to have picked up on the significance of this before now, perhaps because the paths of Johnson's and Turner's careers in New England did not cross, the name Turner is common, the will is very long (with bequests to about thirty people), and there has previously been no indication that this Nathaniel Turner was the same as the Captain Nathaniel Turner of New England.

But evaluating the court testimony of William Dixey, John Sibley, and John Ramsdell together shows that in 1632, Turner's servants were continuing the work on improving pasturage conditions in Nahant that Johnson's servants had begun in 1629.

And if we accept the equation of John Ramsdell and John Ravensdale based on the evidence above, that strengthens the independent link between Isaac Johnson and Captain Nathaniel Turner: in 1627 John Ramsdell was a servant to Johnson, in 1630 Johnson died, and by 1632 Ramsdell was a servant to Turner. It almost seems as if Turner might have in some sense inherited Ramsdell's services from Johnson.

It may also be noteworthy that on 7 November 1632, Nathaniel Turner, along with Peter Palfry and Roger Conant, was deputized to lay out land in Saugus for John Humphrey.^[40] Humphrey was married to Isaac Johnson's wife's sister.^[41]

Strengthening the case is the fact that Nathaniel Turner gave the name Isaac to the second of his two sons, who was baptized in New Haven in 1640.^[42]

With these links, the Nathaniel Turner who later lived in Lynn and was John Ramsdell's master becomes the obvious candidate to be the Nathaniel Turner in Isaac Johnson's 1627 will.

Their relationship would be socioeconomically unsurprising. Turner was well educated and held many important positions in New England,^[43] which accords with the Johnson family's education and prominence. In the 1640s Turner was among New Haven's more wealthy residents, though his wealth was not on a

³⁷ Essex County Deeds 5:64.

³⁸ *Records and Files* [note 2], 1:403. Isaac Ramsdell testified in court in 1655.

³⁹ *Winthrop Papers* [note 14], 2:55.

⁴⁰ Shurtleff, *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay* [note 9], 1:102.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 414.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 642.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 639-643.

par with Johnson’s.^[44] Their relationship would also explain why Turner initially settled at Lynn and not elsewhere in the colony.

The Phonological Plausibility of a Ravensdale/Ramsdale Alternation

While the alternation of the names Ravensdale and Ramsdale may be zoologically far-fetched, it is phonologically straightforward. In the early 1600s the vowel shift which ultimately changed the stressed vowel of English *raven* from [a] to [ei] was not complete, so in many regions the vowel sounds of the words *raven* and *ram* were more similar to each other than they are today.^[45] Dr. George Redmonds, an expert on English surnames, has confirmed that the shift from Ravensdale to Ramsdale or Ramsdell is “absolutely OK.”^[46]

A Possible Origin in Sempringham, Lincolnshire

A cursory search of the English parish registers index at familysearch.org shows early Ramsdell/Ramsdale entries clustered in northern England and the less common Ravensdale name in Lincolnshire. Notably, among these are several Ravensdale and Ramsdell/Ramsdale entries in Sempringham, the home of Isaac Johnson’s wife Arbella. Isaac Johnson was at Sempringham just around the time when he would have been trying to recruit servants to go to New England.

The Sempringham parish registers, which survive with gaps from 1558, contain fifteen entries under variations of the surname Ravensdale during the years 1575 to 1626, and eighteen entries under variations of the surname Ramsdale during the years 1636 to 1693.^[47] All these entries clearly relate to members of the same family. Thus the same surname transition (from Ravensdale to Ramsdell) that we observe in records of John Ramsdell in New England occurs independently in the Sempringham parish records. This strengthens the conclusion that John Ramsdell and John Ravensdale were the same man.

The Sempringham parish registers are missing from Easter 1599 to Easter 1603, and disordered and incomplete from 1633 to 1661. But among the surviving entries is one for a John Ravensdale, son of Francis Ravensdale, baptized 10 October 1607.^[48] No death or marriage for him was found in the registers.

A will and an estate inventory survive for Francis Ravensdale, laborer of Pointon (a village in the parish of Sempringham). The will, dated 9 May 1636,

⁴⁴ Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *Records of the Colony and Plantation of New Haven, from 1638 to 1649*, vol. 1 (Hartford: Case, Tiffany, and Co., 1857), 91–93.

⁴⁵ See E. J. Dobson, *English Pronunciation 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 545–548, 594–603, and *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 19 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888–1919), 8:177.

⁴⁶ Email from George Redmonds to the editor, dated 6 June 2017.

⁴⁷ C. W. Foster et al., “Parish Registers Transcripts for Sempringham [*sic*], 1558–1796,” [FHL 0,436,046 Item 2].

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, “Vol 1 Sempringham,” p. 7.

mentions wife Margerie, son Francis, and daughter Grace Ravensdale. Among the will's provisions, Francis bequeathed his wife and daughter each a cow and a calf.^[49] The inventory, dated 11 July 1636, makes it clear that Francis was involved in dairying. He owned no real property, but among his possessions "in the milkehouse" were a fifteen-pound pot of butter, twenty-three small cheeses, and two "milkepans," and he had several head of cattle.^[50]

Even though John was not named in Francis's will, John still may have been Francis's son. John could have received his portion previously and would in any case have had no practical use for any of Francis's property. John Ramsdell's later involvement with keeping cattle on Nahant, as well as his long career as a husbandman in Lynn, would be unsurprising fates for the son of a dairyman. It would be wise, though, to investigate other contemporary Ravensdales and Ramsdells in Lincolnshire before drawing any conclusions.^[51]

Sempringham parish registers fill out the picture of Francis's life. He married Alice Edwards on 27 August 1603 and had children Grace, baptized 6 June 1604, John, baptized 10 October 1607, and Anne, baptized 15 October 1609. His wife Alice was buried 8 November 1609, and his daughter Anne was buried 4 March 1609/10. His next marriage was not recorded, but his son Francis was baptized 19 September 1614. An Alice Ravensdale, who was buried in Sempringham 29 August 1623, could have been a daughter, perhaps named for his first wife. The widow "Margerī" or "Margaret" Ravensdale, evidently Francis's wife, was buried 29 April 1638.^[52]

Stamford, Connecticut

The land making up the town of Stamford, Connecticut was originally purchased by Nathaniel Turner for the New Haven Colony on 1 July 1640. At the time of purchase it was called Rippowam(s) or Toquams. Shortly afterwards it was purchased by a group from Wethersfield who subsequently settled there.^[53] On 6 April 1642, the town's name was changed from Rippowams to "Stamforde" by the General Court of New Haven Colony.^[54] Aside from general agreement that the name was somehow inspired by Stamford in Lincolnshire or possibly one of the other Stamfords in England, it seems that no one knows why. As one Stamford historian put it, "There appears to be nothing in the

⁴⁹ Consistory Court of Lincoln, registered wills, vol. 133, folio 213 [FHL 0,198,891].

⁵⁰ Lincolnshire Archives, INV/144/154, available at www.lincstothepast.com.

⁵¹ The records of several other Ravensdale and Ramsdell estates in nearby areas of Lincolnshire survive. See C. W. Foster, ed., *Calendars of Lincoln Wills, Vol. 2, Consistory Court Wills* (London: British Record Society, 1910), 149, 150, and C. W. Foster, ed., *Calendars of Administrations in the Consistory Court of Lincoln, A.D. 1540-1659*, Publications of the Lincoln Record Society, vol. 16 (1921), 112, 315.

⁵² Foster, "Semperingham Transcripts" [note 47], "Vol 1 Semperingham," pp. 3, 4, 7, 8, 17, and 29, and Bishop's Transcripts, p. 2.

⁵³ E. B. Huntington, *History of Stamford, Connecticut* (Stamford, Conn.: the author, 1868), 94-95; Edward R. Lambert, *History of the Colony of New Haven* (New Haven, Conn.: Hitchcock & Stafford, 1838), 175-176; Edward T. W. Gillespie, *Picturesque Stamford* (Stamford, Conn.: Gillespie Bros., 1892), 30-31.

⁵⁴ Hoadly, *Records of New Haven from 1638 to 1649* [note 44], 69.

records to show definitely why this name was selected.”^[55] He added that “It is to be regretted . . . that a point of so much interest in the early history of Stamford must remain without the definite and authoritative decision of some formal record made at the time.”^[56]

Since Isaac Johnson’s parents were from Stamford in Lincolnshire, Nathaniel Turner may have had connections to that Stamford too. Nathaniel Turner was not a deputy to the New Haven General Court at the 6 April 1642 meeting, but he was frequently involved with the court both before and after that date,^[57] so it is not inconceivable that he might have had a hand in renaming the town as Stamford and might have had personal reasons for such a choice.

How Were Isaac Johnson and Nathaniel Turner Related?

The author has begun trying to confirm a relationship between Isaac Johnson and Nathaniel Turner, and presents the information below for the benefit of anyone wishing to continue.

Nathaniel Turner’s English origins have never been established. One male-line descendant of Nathaniel Turner has tested his Y-DNA at FamilyTreeDNA and joined the Turner Y-DNA project. This person is in haplogroup I and does not match any other Turner lineage in the project.^[58]

A Nathaniel Turner married Margery “Haukslye” at St. James, Clerkenwell, London, on 16 October 1620.^[59] A Rebecka Turner, daughter of Nathaniel and Margery Turner, was baptized at St. Andrew, Holborn, London, on 29 May 1629.^[60] These records bear further investigation, as Nathaniel Turner of New Haven had a daughter Rebecca for whom Anderson estimates a birthdate of 1629. A 1620 marriage would fit with the estimated birthdates of his other children and with his being a contemporary of Isaac Johnson.

In about 1638, Isaac Johnson’s father, Abraham Johnson, wrote a history of his own and his two wives’ families in the hope that it would help him receive a coat of arms. An incomplete abstract of this unusual manuscript (which is of interest in several ways) was published in the *Register* in 1854.^[61] The whereabouts of the original document are unknown to the author, but a copy of it, made in 1901, is held at the Bodleian Library.^[62] The name Turner does not appear in it at all.

⁵⁵ Gillespie, *Picturesque Stamford* [note 53], 30.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁷ Anderson, *Winthrop Fleet* [note 8], 640–643.

⁵⁸ FamilyTreeDNA kit #134814 (familytreedna.com/public/turnerdnaproject/default.aspx), as of July 2017.

The name Turner does not appear on the genealogical chart of Isaac Johnson’s father’s family in Howard, *Miscellanea Genealogical et Heraldica* [note 18], new series, 1:450–451.

⁵⁹ “England Marriages, 1538–1973,” database at familysearch.org.

⁶⁰ “England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975,” database at familysearch.org.

⁶¹ Pishey Thompson, “The Johnson Family,” *Register* 8 (1854):359–362.

⁶² Bodleian Library, Oxford University, MS. Don. d. 202. The finding aid for the collection calls this document a “Copy by Arthur Hawley, 1901, of ‘the Abraham Johnson manuscript’ of 1638, containing queries about his ancestry to establish his coat of arms.” The document itself notes that the original was “found with some old papers in Mrs Hopkinson[’s] possession & handed over by

In the manuscript, Abraham Johnson uses the word “cousin” in its modern sense of parent’s sibling’s child.^[63] However, the document also states that Abraham Johnson was an only child and that Isaac Johnson’s mother, Anna (Meadows) Johnson, had only one surviving sibling.^[64] Abraham calls this sibling Margery Meadows, and says that she married William Walker and had as sole issue a son William. Indeed, Isaac Johnson mentioned “my kinsman Mr. William Walker of Stamford” in his 1627 will.^[65]

Thus, not only do we not find any Turners in Abraham Johnson’s manuscript, but his account makes it seem that we have to cast a net wider than Isaac Johnson’s first cousins by blood in looking for a Turner relative. Nathaniel Turner might have been a more distant cousin, he might have been a step-cousin through Isaac Johnson’s stepmother or one of Abraham Johnson’s two stepmothers, he might have been a cousin by marriage through Isaac’s wife, or Isaac Johnson might not have used the word cousin in the modern sense after all.

One possibility worth further investigation involves Abraham Johnson’s great-aunt Frances Lacy, who married John Beville of Sawtry, Huntingdonshire (between Stamford and Peterborough). Abraham Johnson mentions the Beville family in his manuscript.^[66] John and Frances (Lacy) Beville’s daughter Elizabeth Beville married Stephen Turner of Sawtry.^[67] Their grandchildren would have been Isaac Johnson’s third cousins.

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Mrs Hopkinson January 1901.” Aleta Brown kindly made digital images of the document for the author.

⁶³ On the different meanings of the word “cousin” see *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* [note 45], 2:1097.

⁶⁴ Abraham Johnson manuscript [note 62], at leaf 13.

⁶⁵ *Winthrop Papers* [note 14], 2:54–55.

⁶⁶ Abraham Johnson manuscript [note 62], at leaf 8.

⁶⁷ Asselia S. Lichliter, *700 Years of the Beville Family of Huntingdonshire, England*, rev.ed. (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1999), 3-147 through 3-154; Nicholas Charles, *The Visitation of the County of Huntingdon* (London: Camden Society, 1849), 9; Douglas Richardson, *Royal Ancestry: A Study in Colonial and Medieval Families*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: the author, 2013), 1:361.