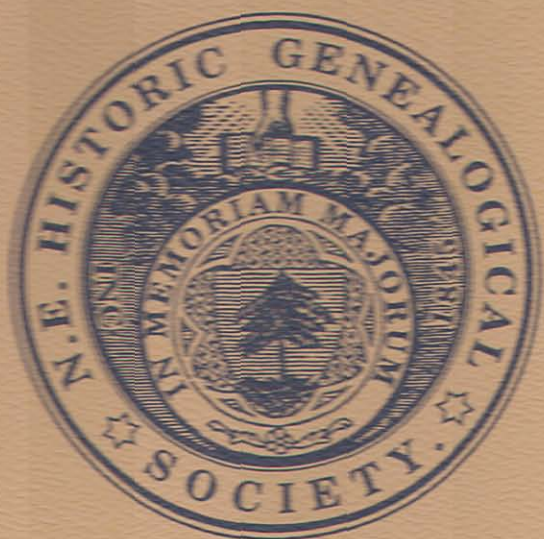


The New England
Historical *and* Genealogical
Register



Volume 158 October 2004

Whole Number 632

www.NewEnglandAncestors.org

REBECCA, WIFE OF THOMAS¹ JOSSELYN
OF HINGHAM AND LANCASTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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With little doubt, the best published genealogical account of 1635 New England immigrant Thomas¹ Josselyn remains that by Elizabeth French (later Bartlett) in volume 71 of the *Register*.^[1] Curiously, however, Miss French avoided mentioning two questionable statements about Thomas Josselyn's family that were already in print by the time her article was published in 1917. One was inclusion of a son Joseph who did not exist. The other claim was of a maiden name for Rebecca, wife of Thomas. Joseph's invention was explained many years ago.^[2] This article reveals Rebecca's true maiden name.

When in April 1635 the Josselyns enrolled to sail from London to Boston aboard the *Increase*, Rebecca was listed as 43, the only known record of her age.^[3] Following the family's arrival in New England, the next discovered mention of her is 9 May 1660, when in his will, Thomas "Joslin" of Lancaster

bequeathed to "my wife Rebecca Joslin" for the rest of her life, "all my goods, moveables & all my estate in lands & housing with barns & cow houses" in Lancaster, as well as "all debts that be owing to mee either in this Towne of Lanchaster or elsewhere, whatsoever with all lawfull power to recover them." Rebecca was to have "so much of my goodes and lands as shall remaine undisposed for her comfortable maintenance & subsistence in manner hereafter following," and she to be "whole & sole Executor, during the time of her life."^[4] On 29 March 1661, widow Rebecca Joslin swore to the inventory of Thomas's estate, taken two months earlier by William Kerley and Jacob Farrer, both of Lancaster.^[5] In 1664 Rebecca sold off her rights to her late husband Thomas's land, signing the deeds with an R mark, or, in one instance, an I [for Josselyn].^[6] Her last two conveyances were as the wife of William Kerley, whom she married, as his third wife, in Lancaster 6 or 16 May 1664.^[7] William died in Lancaster 14 July 1670,^[8] but no record of Rebecca's death has been found. She had probably predeceased William, as he named no wife in his will of 26 July 1669. The inventory of his estate, taken 19 July 1670, by John Moore and Roger Sumner (the latter a son-in-law of Rebecca), was amended by Nathaniel Joslin (son of Rebecca) and John Lewis to include "a small parcel of goods more, which came to him [Kerley] by his Last wife."^[9]

* The author thanks for his helpful comments and suggestions, Robert Charles Anderson, FASG; for research in records at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford, England, Peter C. Nutt, AGRA; for additional assistance and research, Michael J. Wood, AGRA, and for bringing the key document to his attention, Jennifer Butler, Principal Archivist at the Essex Record Office.

¹ Elizabeth French, "Genealogical Research in England—Josselyn," *Register* 71 (1917):19–33, 227–57. For Thomas's earliest English ancestry, Miss French relied on the published visitations of Essex, the pedigrees of which probably cannot be verified before about the year 1200. She did not enumerate all the various claims of Thomas¹ Josselyn's ancestry already in print, some of which she may not have seen. One of the more interesting is Laura Elmendorf Skeels, "The Jocelyn-Joslin Family," in volume 6 of *The Journal of American History* (1912), pp. 516–41, in which Thomas was said to have been the son of Sir Thomas Jocelyn, father of Henry and John Josselyn, who also went to New England in the 1630s. While Edith S. Wessler followed Miss French in giving Thomas¹ Josselyn's English ancestry in *The Jocelyn-Joslin-Joslyn-Josselyn Family* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1961), she unfortunately included Ms. Skeels's inventive lineage to the town of Josselin in Brittany and a descent from Charlemagne.

At the time of Thomas's immigration and for many of his descendants for several generations, *Josselyn* seems to have been the principal spelling, although several variations are found, and indeed, the immigrant may have himself preferred *Joslin*, although this is not totally clear.

² Roger D. Joslyn, "There Was No Joseph¹ Josselyn," *The American Genealogist* 56 (1980):153–54.

³ The family's enrollment date was 17 April, which in some accounts has been incorrectly given as the date of sailing. John Camden Hotten, ed., *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality...* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1874; repr. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1974), 55. The earliest publication of this record was evidently by James Savage in "Gleanings for New England History," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3rd series, 7 (1843):256, where the name is rendered "Jestlin." In the original list (1635 London Port Book, The National Archives [formerly the Public Record Office] E157/20, p. 17), dated 17 April 1635, the name was written as Jostlin: a Husbandman—Tho: Jostlin—43, Rebeca his wife—43; Rebecca—18, Dorothy—11, Nathaniell—08, Eliza—6, Mary—1, children of the family [of] Thos Jostlin; Eliza Ward, maid servant, 38. My thanks to Robert C. Anderson for a copy of the original list.

⁴ Witnesses to the will, allowed in Cambridge 2 April 1661, were Murdera Maccloud (his mark), James Butler (his mark), and James Farrer. At the top of the recorded will, the name is written Thomas Joceline, but is spelled in the will as Joslin and Josline, and his signature was recorded as Thomas Joslin (Middlesex County Probate, First Series, 2:82–84; see also the abstract published in Mary Lovering Holman and Winifred Lovering Holman, comps., *Ancestry of Colonel John Harrington Stevens and His Wife Frances Helen Miller*, 2 vols. [Concord, N.H.: privately printed, 1948–52], 1:74–75, and the full transcript in Robert H. Rodgers, *Middlesex County in the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England: Records of Probate and Administration, March 1660/61–December 1670* [Boston: NEHGS, 2001], 17–19). There are no probate papers for this estate.

Thomas "Joslin" died in Lancaster 3 January 1660/61 (Andrew H. Ward, "Lancaster Records," *Register* 16 [1862]:359; Henry S. Nourse, ed., *The Early Records of Lancaster, Massachusetts, 1643–1725* [Lancaster, Mass.: W.J. Coulter, 1884], 323; Henry B. Nourse, ed., *The Birth, Marriage and Death Register, Church Records and Epitaphs of Lancaster, Massachusetts, 1643–1850* [Lancaster, Mass.: W.J. Coulter, 1890], 14).

⁵ Middlesex County Probate, First Series, 2:85; Rodgers, *Middlesex County Records of Probate* [note 4], 18.

⁶ Middlesex County Deeds, 3:102, 140–42. Transcripts of all but the first deed are in Rodgers, *Middlesex County Records of Probate* [note 4], 19–22.

⁷ Ward, "Lancaster Records" [note 4], *Register* 16:355, showing her name as Rebecca Joselin and the date as 6 May; Nourse, *Early Records of Lancaster* [note 4], 320, and Nourse, *Birth, Marriage and Death Register of Lancaster* [note 4], 11, show the date as 16 May.

⁸ Ward, "Lancaster Records" [note 4], *Register* 16:353; Nourse, *Early Records of Lancaster* [note 4], 323; Nourse, *Birth, Marriage and Death Register of Lancaster* [note 4], 13.

⁹ Middlesex County Probate, First Series, 3:238–39; see also the transcript in Rodgers, *Middlesex County Records of Probate* [note 4], 626–27. There are no probate papers for this estate.