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THE ENGLISH ORIGINS OF JOHN BRIGGS
OF TAUNTON, MASS.

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In 1657 John Briggs, Sr., appeared in Taunton MA where he took the Oath of Fidelity and was granted land next to the house he had purchased from James Burt. In the absence of any record of the purchase of this house from Burt, we cannot say how long (if at all) before 1657 he may have arrived. Briggs has remained somewhat of a mysterious figure, since past research has not found the dates of his birth, marriage, or death. He was alive in 1665, when Shadrach Thayer of Braintree lodged a complaint against him. He was apparently dead by 1675, for in that year a list of "the heads of families in Taunton" includes only his sons William, Richard, and Hugh, together with a Jonathan Briggs [Samuel H. Emery, *History of Taunton MA* (1893) p. 93]. He was certainly dead by 1686 when a deed between two of his sons refers to him as then deceased. It appears that John Briggs was an immigrant, not connected with any of the other New England families of that name. For an excellent overview of John Briggs and his descendants, the reader may consult TAG 33:76-83 (Mrs. John E. Barclay, "Notes on the Briggs Families of Taunton, Mass."), and NEHGR 125:77ff. (Edna Anne Hannibal and Claude W. Barlow, "Richard, William and Hugh, Sons of John Briggs of Taunton, Mass.").

Recently, in the course of research into the English origins of my ancestors, Thomas and Richard Thayer of Braintree MA, I stumbled upon the home parish in England of the immigrant John Briggs of Taunton MA. In 1906 Walter Faxon and Edward Henry Whorff presented conclusive evidence that immigrants Thomas and Richard Thayer were originally from the parish of Thornbury, co. Gloucester, England (NEHGR 60:282-91, "Tayer [Thayer] Families in the Parish Register of Thornbury, Gloucestershire, England." Note: Tayer is the original English spelling of the name). After reading this article, I ordered a microfilm copy of the Thornbury parish records to study them further. They proved quite a surprise. Although they were kept in good order starting from 1550, for most of the 100 years following this date the names of the parents were not recorded with the baptism or burial of a child -- only the name of the child and the godparents. As a result, two or three families with the same surname might have had children recorded during the same period, but determining which child belonged to which couple proved extremely challenging.

Making my way through the numerous Tayer-Thayer entries, I finally determined that immigrants Thomas and Richard were the sons of an earlier Richard Thayer who was christened on 6 May 1565 in Thornbury, co. Gloucester, England. I found further that they had at least two brothers and two sisters: Catherine (bp. 24 February 1603); William (bp. 6 May 1605); Agnes (bp. 15 March 1607); and John (bp. 29 April 1610, bur-

ied 12 October 1610). Tracing the subsequent history of Agnes Tayer, I ascertained that she married in Thornbury on 11 May 1633 John Briggs, and they had three children recorded in the Thornbury registers: John Briggs (bp. 1634), Katherine Briggs (bp. 1636/7), and Richard Briggs (bp. 1638/9). The registers indicate that this family was in Thornbury as late as 1644, after which a gap ensues in the parish records. When I checked to learn if this couple might have immigrated to New England, I came upon the John Briggs who first appeared in Taunton MA in 1657.

A review of printed material available on this family convinced me that the John Briggs who married Agnes Tayer at Thornbury in 1633 was indeed the settler of Taunton MA. First, John Briggs the immigrant was known to have had one son, Richard, born prior to 1644. As mentioned above John of Thornbury had a son Richard christened in 1638/9. Second, John Briggs the immigrant almost certainly had a son John of uncertain birth date. We know there must have been a younger John Briggs in Taunton, because the immigrant was called John Briggs, Sr., on several occasions over the period 1657-1664 (lastly on 1 Mar. 1663/4) in the Taunton Proprietors' and Plymouth Colony records; no other known John Briggs seems to fill the need for a younger John living locally at the appropriate time. As seen above, John of Thornbury had a son John baptized in 1634. (NOTE: Hannibal and Barlow [NEHGR 125:77-8] hesitantly proposed John^o Briggs [Clement^o] to fill this role, but as Mr. David L. Greene pointed out to me, this John appears to have died before 1662.) Third, in 1645 Shadrach Thayer of Braintree MA lodged a complaint against John Briggs of Taunton MA. Shadrach was a son of Thomas Thayer, the immigrant to Braintree, and therefore would have been a nephew of John Briggs' wife Agnes. Fourth, we know that Nathaniel Thayer, another early settler of Taunton, was son of William and Mary (Kellaway) Tayer of Thornbury; and Nathaniel was also a nephew of John Briggs' wife Agnes. Fifth, among descendants of John Briggs the immigrant, I find that Rebecca Briggs, daughter of his son Richard, married in 1690/1 Nathaniel Thayer, grandson of immigrant Richard Thayer of Braintree. Also I find that Thomas Briggs, son of immigrant John's son William, married in 1689 Abigail Thayer, daughter of Nathaniel Thayer, the immigrant to Taunton.

In summary, all the known facts regarding John Briggs of Thornbury, co. Gloucester, fit the known facts regarding the Taunton MA immigrant. The continued association of the Taunton family with the other Thayer families in New England supplies good supplemental evidence that immigrant John Briggs was indeed the man from Thornbury.

The following items were all the Briggs/Bridges entries found in the Thornbury parish records from 1550 up to 1644 when the gap appears. I also searched for available Briggs/Bridges wills, and located the will of John Briggs' father, Richard Briggs. (Dates shown, including any double dates,

are as given in the records.) Because the Briggs family in Thornbury was not a large one, the skeletal outline of the family was easy to construct.

Christenings

- 4 Oct. 1550 A child of John a Brygge and her name is Jone.
 May 1597 John Briggs. Godparents: John Clarke, William Cliffe and Margaret Pooke.
 22 Apr. 1599 William Bridges. Godparents: William Pycke, William Grymar and Elizabeth Palmer.
 25 Apr. 1602 Thomas Bridg. Godparents: Thomas Stompe, John Barnes and Jone Heatfield. [This child was almost certainly the son of Thomas Bridges and Jone Barnes who married at Thornbury in 1599.]
 21 Jan. 1615/6 Elyner Brydge of Pawfield was baptized at Tortworth. Godparents: William Stacy, Elyner Crabbe and Mary Tylladams.
 17 Nov. 1616 Richard Draper. Godparents: Richard Grive, John Champeis & Joane Patch.
 1 Nov. 1618 Edward Draper. Godparents: Edward Dyer, John Collines and Elizabeth Demick.
 25 Feb. 1620 William Drap. Godparents: Richard Tyndall, John Bell and Mary Briggs.
 21 Sept. 1634 John Bridges. Godparents: John Bridges, John Dawnee and Jayne Hadlan. [John Dawnee married at Thornbury in 1631; Catherine Tayer, sister of Agnes (Tayer) Briggs.]
 6 Jan. 1636/7 Katherine Bridges. Godparents: Thomas Dymery, Katherine Dawnee and Joan Jones. [Katherine Dawnee was Katherine Tayer, wife of John Dawnee.]
 17 March 1638/9 Richard Briggs. Godparents: Richard Tayer, Giles Wheeler and Joane Cobbe. [Richard Tayer was brother of Agnes (Tayer) Briggs. Giles Wheeler was brother of Margery Wheeler, wife of Agnes (Tayer) Briggs' brother, Thomas Tayer.]
 22 Apr. 1644 Gabriell Tayer. Godparents: William Callaway, John Briggs and Marie Callaway. [Gabriel was almost certainly son of Agnes (Tayer) Briggs' brother, William Tayer, who m. at Thornbury in 1626 Mary Kellaway/Callaway.]

Marriages

- 17 Apr. 1564 Johannes Abridge & Johanna Fluellin
 12 Nov. 1576 Thomas Abridge & Agneta Francome
 24 Aug. 1584 Raffe Furrlyn & Agnis Bridges
 19 Oct. 1590 Richard Brigs & Agnis Winged
 7 Jan. 1597 Bartholomew Bridges & Amy Lipyeat
 1 Feb. 1599 Thomas Bridges & Jone Barne
 13 Oct. 1610 John Worlocke & Margerie Burge alias Bridge
 11 Nov. 1633 John Briggs & Agnes Tayer

Burials

- 28 July 1570 Bartholomew Bridg

30 Apr. 1620 Richard Bridges
 1 Feb. 1622 Thomas Bridge from Falsfield
 6 Jan. 1626 Edward Draper
 24 June 1633 Eleanor Bridge from Fafield

Will of Richard Bridges [sic]
 Gloucestershire Record Office (1620/139)

In the name of god Amen I Richard Briges of Grovesend wth in the p'ishe of Thornbury & Countie of Glouoc: husbandman being sicke in Body but of a p'fecte Remembrance (thanks be unto god) doe make this my last will & Testament in manner & forme ffollowing/ ffirste I bequeth my Soule unto almighty god, my maker & to his sonne Ihesus Christ my Redeemer by whose death & passion I trust to be saved & by noe other meanes. And my bodye to the earth. It[em] I give & bequeth unto my sonn Will^m Briges the son of tenn shillines to be payd unto him wth in three monthes after my decease It[em] I give & bequeth unto my sonn John Briges the son of tenn shillines to be payd in like manner. It[em] I give & bequeth to my daughter Joane Draper the son of tenn shillines to be payd wth in three monthes after my decease; All the rest of my goods cattells & chattelles whatsoever not herein bequeathed (my debts & funerall being discharged) I give and bequeth unto Agnes Briges my wiffe whom I make & ordayne my sole Executrix of this my last will & Testament; In witness whereof I have putt my hand & seall this 30th of Januar; 1619.

Witnesses hereunto
 Richard X Briges
 mark
 Ric: Haynes
 Willm Draper
 Willm Briges

Proved 24 July 1620 at the Consistory Court at Gloucester, co. Gloucester, England.

A Brief Outline of the Family
 (further accounts in TAG 33:76ff. and NEHR 125:77ff.)

RICHARD^A BRIGGS (or Bridges) b. ca. 1545; buried Thornbury, co. Gloucester, England 30 April 1620. He m. at Thornbury 19 Oct. 1590 AGNES WINGOOD, living 30 Jan. 1619[/20]. His will indicated he was a husbandman, living at Grovesend, within the parish of Thornbury.

Children (BRIGGS) of Richard and Agnes:

- 1 JOANE m. certainly bef. 30 Jan. 1619[/20] (and prob. bef. 1616) ----- DRAPER (perhaps the William Draper who witnessed her father's will); mentioned in father's will of above date.

Their probable (DRAPER) children bp. Thornbury were:

- 1 RICHARD bp. 17 Nov. 1615.
 11 EDWARD bp. 1 Nov. 1618; prob. bur. Thornbury 6 Jan. 1626[/?].
 111 poss. WILLIAM, who was bp. 25 Feb. 1620[/?]. (Only if Drap was intended for Draper in the record).

2 JOHN¹ bp. Thornbury 1 May 1595; mentioned in father's 1619 will. He m. Thornbury 11 Nov. 1633 AGNES TAYER, bp. Thornbury 15 March 1607, dau. of Richard Tayer of Thornbury. She was sister of Richard and Thomas Tayer who immigrated to New England in 1640. John and Agnes were living in Thornbury in 1644 (he was godparent to a child of his brother-in-law William Tayer). In or before 1657 John Briggs settled in Taunton MA. He was known to be living in 1665, when his wife's nephew Shadrach Tayer of Braintree MA lodged a legal complaint against him (Shurtleff and Pulsifer, Rec. of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England 12 vols. [Boston 1895-61, rpt. New York 1968], hereafter Plym. Col. Rec., 7:126). He was prob. dead by 1675; no death date has been found for either John or Agnes.

Their (BRIGGS) children, first three bp. Thornbury, were:

- i JOHN² bp. 21 Sept. 1634; prob. the younger John Briggs living in Taunton or nearby in 1661 and 1664, which would account for his father being called John Sr. No other record of him found.
- ii KATHERINE bp. 6 Jan. 1636/7. Nothing further is known of her.
- iii RICHARD bp. 17 March 1638/9; d. Taunton bet. 13 Dec. 1692 (when heirs signed agreement). He m. Taunton 15 Aug. 1662 REBECCA HODKINS, dau. of William and Ann (Hinds) Hoskins (Plym. Col. Rec. 8:38; NENR 125:80).
- iv poss. JOHANNA, who m. (prenuptial agreement 24 July 1665), as second wife, PETER TALLMAN of Portsmouth RI, Hanburg, and Barbados. In the agreement she was called "of Taunton," but no proof found for her relationship to this family (Plymouth Colony LR 3:37; NENR 125:80).
- v WILLIAM b. ca. 1645 [not 1649 as in Hannibal, but falls in the gap in Thornbury records]; d. Taunton 3 Jan. 1728 aged 83. He m. (1) Taunton 6 Nov. 1666 SARAH MACOMBER, dau. of William and Ursula (Cooper [see TG 2:170]) Macomber; she d. Taunton 20 March 1680 (Plym. Col. Rec. 8:38, 81). Did he m. (2) Dedham MA "7th 2th, 1680" [7 Apr. 1680?]; ABIGAIL MASON (Dedham VR 1:17; NENR 125:82, which gives an incorrect date)?
- vi ROSE m. Taunton 1 March 1682/3 MARTHA EVERSON, dau. of John Everson of Plymouth MA (Plym. Col. Rec. 8:84). He d. Taunton bet. 22 Aug. 1692 and 1698 (NENR 125:82).

3 WILLIAM bp. Thornbury 22 April 1599; living in 1619 (mentioned in father's will). No marriage, death, or children found in Thornbury records.