

Continuation of Research into the Origin of Mary Buckett,
early Plymouth colonist and wife of Mayflower passenger George Soule

By Caleb H. Johnson
With English research assistance from Simon Neal
Funded by the Soule Kindred in America

2015

BACKGROUND

In 2013, in a research report entitled “Research into the Possible English Origins of Mary Bucket, Wife of *Mayflower* Passenger George Soule,” I systematically examined the information that could be gleaned from American records, and surveyed the available English resources, to pin down the most probable candidate found so far to have been the Mary Buckett who arrived in Plymouth Colony onboard the ship *Anne*, and subsequently married *Mayflower* passenger George Soule.

Mary Beckett of Watford, Hertfordshire, was baptized on 24 February 1605, the daughter of John and Ann (Alden) Beckett. It was hypothesized that Mary came on the ship *Anne* in the care of the Warrens, and that explains George and Mary Soule’s apparent association with the Warren family in the 1627 Division of Cattle. The Warren family was also from Hertfordshire.

John Beckett was baptized 24 December 1581 at St. Mary, Watford, to a father also named John Beckett, a tailor. John Beckett [Sr.] died in July 1590. John Beckett [Jr.] married Ann Alden on 27 November 1603. The Aldens and Becketts both appear to have had some ties to southeastern Buckinghamshire, namely the parishes of Chalfont St. Giles and Beaconsfield.

John and Ann (Alden) Beckett had five children of record: Mary (1605), John (1607), James (1610, bur. 1622), Nathaniel (1612), and Jeremy (1618). Manorial records for Watford were voluminous and only lightly surveyed. A number of records related to John Beckett, as well as some Aldens and Warrens, were uncovered.

John Beckett died in 1619 and his brother-in-law Ralph Beckford oversaw his will and widow Ann was the executrix. Because John Beckett died, his children were likely to have been apprenticed out. Sons Jeremy and John end up in London as drapers and tailors. Mary ‘disappears’, with the hypothesis being that she somehow ended up with Mrs. Elizabeth Warren and her daughters, traveling on the ship *Anne* to Plymouth Colony in 1623.

The purpose of this continued research task was to systematically examine the records of Watford, Hertfordshire and surrounding parishes to see if there is any way to more conclusively tie the family to either the Warrens, or Aldens, and to build up a more complete picture of the Beckett/Buckett family living there. Manorial records for the region are fairly thorough, yet unindexed and mostly in Latin. These records, along with additional parish and probate records and miscellaneous items from The National Archives in Kew, were compiled together by myself and Simon Neal, and the Beckett and Alden family reports below summarizes the material that was uncovered.

THE JOHN BECKETT FAMILY OF WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE

1 **JOHN BECKETT** was born say around 1554, presumably within the vicinity of Watford, Hertfordshire, England. He married a woman named Mary, about 1577, also presumably within the vicinity of Watford, Hertfordshire.^[1]

On the “Morrow of Trinity,” 29 May 1581, John Beckett purchased a messuage with appurtenances in Watford for £40 from Robert and Alice Holmes and their son William.^[2] About 20 January 1587, he purchased another messuage, garden, orchard, and one acre of land for £40 from Michael and Elizabeth Heydon.^[3]

John Beckett, tailor, of Watford, Hertfordshire, made out his will on 20 July 1590. He mentioned his wife **MARY** and made her the executrix. He also named his children John, William, and Elizabeth. He additionally referenced a house he owned at Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire.^[4] John Beckett was buried on 24 July 1590, just four days after making out his will.^[5] His estate inventory was taken on 3 August 1590 by appraisers William Edlyn, John Pratte, John Halye, and John Carter, and amounted to £25 19s 8d. The inventory was exhibited, and the will proved, on 7 August 1590 at Watford.^[6]

The children of John and Mary Beckett, all born at Watford, Hertfordshire:

- i. John, bp. 6 December 1579, bur. 6 December 1580.
- 2 ii. John, bp. 24 December 1581.
- 3 iii. William, bp. 21 February 1583.
- 4 iv. Elizabeth, born about 1587.
- v. Mary, bp. 14 February 1590/1, bur. 14 February 1591/2.

2 **JOHN² BECKETT** was baptized 24 December 1581 at Watford, Hertfordshire, England, the son of John and Mary Beckett. He married there on 27 November 1603 to **ANN ALDYN**, daughter of Thomas and Anne Aldwyn of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. [*See Aldwyn/Alden family, next.*]

In the survey of Watford manor in 1605, John Beckett claimed freehold, “to hold freely by charter ... one messuage with appurtenances called Bickleis in Watford.” The land included a tenement, orchard, garden, barn, stable with curtilage, of about ½ acre, and a newly built tenement with an adjacent garden upon the north-side of the orchard, for which he paid 2s per annum fealty. Additionally

¹ Birth and marriage estimates are based on the baptism date of their first child.

² The National Archives, Feet of Fines, CP 25/2/157/2167/23ELIZITRIN.

³ TNA, Feet of Fines, CP 25/2/158/2189/29ELIZHIL.

⁴ Hertfordshire Record Office, Wills, 7AR138, 20 July 1590.

⁵ Parish registers of Watford, Hertfordshire.

⁶ Hertfordshire Record Office, Inventories, A25/1296, 3 August 1590.

he claimed a customary tenant, as copy hold dated 18 September 1590 (and thus inherited upon his father's death) to "one croft and certain lands with their appurtenances called Androwes, lately Heydons," consisting of "one dwelling house newly built, one garden and area, containing by estimation 6 perches," plus "one close of meadow or pasture called Androwes, containing by estimation 2 acres," for which he paid annually 3s, 4d, with yearly lease value of 46s, 8d.^[7]

On 20 April 1610, John Beckett "surrendered ... one cottage and one small piece of land, containing by estimation 8 poles, or more or less, in Watford, and adjacent next to the messuage called le Kings Heade, and being parcel of a certain close called Litle Andrewes," to Joan Ewer, wife of Ralph Ewer. He also surrendered 6 poles of land in Little Andrews in the tenure of George Scudamore, to Anthony Watson, vicar of the church of Watford.^[8] A year later he and Henry Twitchitt purchased two messuages and a garden from Ralph Ewer for £41.^[9]

Manorial records from Watford indicate that from 1611 to 1618, John Beckett was both a freeholder and copyholder in the manor. He was listed as a homage juror on 4 July 1605, 29 March 1611 and 10 April 1613. On 14 April 1615, both John Beckett and brother-in-law Ralph Beckford are listed as living in the "upper end of the town." On 24 April 1617, John was still at the "upper end" of town, though Beckford was now at the "nether end" of the town.^[10]

On 15 January 1618/9, very shortly before his death, John Beckett "one of the customary tenants of the said manor, lying in extremes, surrendered ... one close called Androas, containing about two acres, abutting upon the land of George Scidmus and Frances Balldin, to Nathaniel his son and his heirs forever." The fee was only 30s because Nathaniel was still a boy, and the fealty was respited by reason of Nathaniel not being of age.^[11]

John Beckett was buried at Watford on 17 January 1618/9, and his estate inventory was taken on 19 February 1618/9. In his estate inventory, he is referred to as a draper. The inventory mentions his hall, great chamber, chamber over the kitchen, chamber over the shop, and a buttery. In his shop he had wares valued at £473 16s 6d, along with business debts of £172 13s 4d, and his estate totaled to £833 7s 2d, with debts of £432. The inventory was exhibited by Anne Becket, widow and executrix, on 30 March 1619, having been taken by Henry Twitchatt, Alexander Aldwin (*i.e.* Alden), and by John's brother-in-law Ralph Beckford.^[12]

On 8 April 1619, the manorial court reported, "we present that John Becket, one of the tenants of this manor, died since the last court seised of a tenement in Watford of freehold, now in the occupation of the widow Becket, and is to pay a relief to the lord of the manor, *viz.* 2s."^[13]

⁷ Hertfordshire Record Office, Manorial Records of Watford [hereafter *Watford manorial records*], Survey of the Manor of Watford, 4 July 3 James I [1605], Ref. 9929, freeholders, No. 32, and customary tenants, No. 11.

⁸ Watford manorial records, 20 April 8 James I [1610], Ref. 9934.

⁹ TNA, Feet of Fines, CP 25/2/304/9]ASITRIN.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *passim.*, Ref. 9935-9942.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Ref. 9942.

¹² Hertfordshire Record Office, Inventories, A25/2619, 19 February 1618[/19].

¹³ Watford manorial records, 8 April 1619, Ref. 9942.

On 13 April 1621, the manorial court of Watford ordered Ralph Heward to make a sufficient fence between Lefthand Close and widow Beckett's orchard.^[14] Widow Ann Beckett was still referred to as a widow in the burial record of her son James on 16 November 1622, after which no further record was found for her.

The children of John and Ann (Aldyn) Beckett, all born at Watford, Hertfordshire:

- i. **MARY³ BECKETT**, bp. 24 February 1605/6. She is hypothesized to be the young woman of that name who came on the ship *Anne* to Plymouth in 1623, in the care of the Warren family of Hertfordshire; and there married *Mayflower* passenger George Soule about 1626. No record of this Mary Beckett was located in Watford or any of the surrounding parishes; combined with the death of her father in 1619 and non-remarriage of her mother (still a widow in 1622), this further suggests custody of her was transferred to another family and she left the area.
- ii. John, bp. 31 January 1607. In 1635, this John Beckett purchased 2 messuages and 2 acres of pasture in Watford from William and Anne Hayward for £60.^[15] This John Beckett, draper of Watford, was the father of John⁴ Beckett who was apprenticed to Nathaniel Beckford, silk-stocking maker of Shoreditch, London, on 8 June 1658, in the records of the Company of Clothworkers. Nathaniel Beckford was the son of Ralph and Elizabeth² (Beckett) Beckford.
- iii. James, bp. 24 August 1610, bur. 16 November 1622.
- iv. Nathaniel, bp. 1 January 1612. He received two acres of land from his father on 15 January 1618/19 as "a boy" with the "fealty ... respited by reason of non-age."^[16]
- v. Jeremy, bp. 10 January 1618. In March 1667, Jeremy Beckett, citizen and merchant tailor of London, made out a will mentioning his sons Samuel⁴, Jeremy⁴, and James⁴ Beckett. Samuel⁴ and Jeremy⁴ Beckett sued each other in the Chancery court in 1670 concerning lands in Harpenden, Wheat Hamstead, and Kimpton, which are all near Watford, Hertfordshire.

3 **WILLIAM² BECKETT** was baptized 21 February 1583 at Watford, Hertfordshire, England. He married there on 23 June 1606 to **KATHERINE GIDDENS**.

In the 1605 survey of the Manor of Watford, William Beckett claimed to freely hold one messuage or tenement "with a garden and orchard adjacent" between Susan Edlyn and John Parker, containing a half acre, with an annual fealty of 12d. He regularly reoccurs in the list of manorial freeholders from 1611 to 1628.

¹⁴ Watford manorial records, 13 April 1621, Ref. 9945.

¹⁵ TNA, Feet of Fines, CP 25/2/430/11CHASIMICH

¹⁶ Watford manorial records, 8 April 1619, Ref. 9942.

On 26 April 1620, the Watford manorial court ordered William Beckett to “remove his soil from the pales of William Blackwell within 14 days,” and on 13 April 1621 he was fined 3s, 4d, for not having removed the soil. In March 1624, William and Katherine Beckett sold to brother-in-law Ralph Beckford one messuage and one garden in Watford for £60.^[17]

William Beckett, tailor, made out his will on 22 April 1632 at Watford, naming his wife Katherine his executrix, and naming his children Elizabeth, Mary, William, Penelope, and Samuel. His estate inventory was taken on 7 June 1632 by Ralph Beckford (his brother-in-law) and Daniel Marvell. His estate amounted to a relatively small £18 2s, widow Katherine exhibiting it on 22 June 1632.

The children of William and Katherine (Giddens) Beckett, all born at Watford, Hertfordshire:

- i. Elizabeth, bp. 25 April 1607.
- ii. Mary, bp. 6 August 1609.
- iii. William, bp. 5 April 1612, died young.
- iv. William, bp. 1 August 1613.
- v. Penelope, bp. 1 April 1616.
- vi. Edward, bp. 17 December 1618, buried 23 January 1618/9.
- vii. Emmanuel, bp. 8 April 1621
- viii. Thomas, bp. 14 January 1623/4
- ix. Samuel, bp. 6 October 1627

4 **ELIZABETH² BECKETT** was born about 1587, estimated from her date of marriage. She married **RALPH BECKFORD** on 6 April 1608 at Watford, Hertfordshire, England.

Watford manorial records indicate that in 1611, Ralph Beckford, tailor, rented a “standing penthouse” in the dwelling of Zachary Hogg. He is listed as a freeholder in manorial records from 1611 through 1628, and was a homage juror on 28 April 1614, 24 April 1617, 13 April 1621, 18 April 1623, 30 April 1625, and 21 April 1626.

On 28 April 1614, John Leader and Ambrose Ewer were recorded as being servants to Ralph Beckford. On 24 April 1617, Ralph Beckford, tailor, purchased a “cottage or tenement in Newe Streete in Watford, now in the occupation of Joan Ewer.” On 9 April 1624, he purchased “one poll of ground in length and 15 feet in bredth ... abutting upon the tenement in New Street in Watford” to extend his property boundary a little further to the south; a month previous he had purchased a messuage and garden for £60 from brother-in-law William Beckett. On 19 May 1627, he purchased a messuage from Alice Bonnicks, wife of Henry Bonnicks, blacksmith. On 31 May 1627, he also sold a messuage, shop, tenement adjoining the churchyard to Robert Nicholls, blacksmith, and Elizabeth his wife. Five weeks

¹⁷ TNA, Feet of Fines, CP 25/2/305/22JASIEASTER.

before Easter in 1633, he purchased 3 cottages, 3 gardens, an orchard and one acre of land in Watford for £40 from Edward and Rebecca Leacye.^[18]

Ralph Beckford was a witness to the sale of a tenement of John² Beckett on 15 January 1618/9; was an appraiser of the inventory of John² Beckett's estate on 19 February 1618/9; and was one of the appraisers on the estate inventory of William² Beckett on 7 June 1632.

Ralph Beckford died in 1646 and his estate administration bond is dated 10 July 1646. John Beckett, of the parish of Watford, draper, "nephew of the said deceased," was bound by £100 to administer the estate "by reason of the renunciation of Thomas Beckford, Elizabeth wife of Edward Richardson, and Mary wife of Thomas Taylor, the natural children of the deceased."

The children of Ralph and Elizabeth (Beckett) Beckford, all born at Watford, Hertfordshire:

- i. Elizabeth, bp. 8 August 1610. Married Edward Richardson before 1646.
- ii. Thomas, bp. 7 February 1612. Living in 1646.
- iii. Ralph, bp. 5 August 1618.
- iv. Sarah, bp. 3 April 1623.
- v. Anne, bp. 6 January 1625.
- vi. Mary. Married Thomas Taylor before 1646.
- vii. Nathaniel, bp. 29 August 1630. Nathaniel Beckford, silk-stocking maker of Shoreditch, London, oversaw the apprenticeship of John⁴ Beckett, son of John³ Beckett of Watford, an arrangement found in the records of the Company of Clothworkers on 8 June 1658.

THE ALDWYN/ALDEN FAMILY

1 **EDMUND ALDWYNE** was born say 1500, and lived in the parish of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. He married **MARGARET**. He made out his will on 4 August 1557, calling himself a yeoman. He lived for some time after, as his will was ultimately proved on 12 February 1569/70. In his will, he mentions wife Margaret; children George, Magdalen, Bridget, Alice; and makes his sons Thomas and Richard his executors.

The children of Edmund Aldwyne, named in his will,¹⁹ were all presumably born in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The parish registers there do not commence until 1569, so their baptism records have not survived. Birth order uncertain.

- 2 i. Thomas, born say 1535.

¹⁸ TNA, Feet of Fines, CP 25/2/429/9CHASIEASTER.

¹⁹ Lincolnshire Records Office, Will of Edmund Aldwyne of Rickmansworth, 4 August 1557.

- ii. Richard.
- iii. George. Mentioned in brother Thomas's will in 1596.
- iv. Magdalen. Unmarried in 1557. Living in 1596.
- v. Bridget. Unmarried in 1557.
- vi. Alice . Unmarried in 1557. Living in 1596.

2 **THOMAS ALDWYN**, born say 1535, yeoman, lived in the parish of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. He was named an executor of the will of his father Edmund Aldwyne in 1557, so he was at least twenty-one by that time. He administered his father's estate on 12 February 1569/70. He married **ANNE**, perhaps around 1560, assuming Nicholas baptized in 1564 at Rickmansworth was one of their earlier children.

Thomas Aldwyn made out his will on 1 September 1592.²⁰ Thomas Aldwin, householder, was buried at Rickmansworth on 6 October 1592,^[21] and his will was proved 6 December 1592. He mentions his wife Anne, whom he makes an executor along with son Charles. Also mentioned are son Nicholas, who received a close of land called Copthorne Field Hill in Rickmansworth, "being parcel of his lease of Croxley Hall;" a close called Broomye Close lying at Casho Bridge; a close called Little Nutfield; a piece of meadow lying in Rush Meadow; and a little piece of ground lying near Scottesbridge currently occupied by Augustine Alexander. Son James received £35 when he turned 20. Son Alexander received all his goods and household stuff at the Bell [an Inn] at Rickmansworth; two heiffers; a grayish colt; and a list of miscellaneous household items. Son Jerome, then under 20, got £10 and a bull when he would come of age. Daughter Anne received £30, a cow, 10 sheep, when she turned 18. Daughter Sarah was to receive £40 when she turned eighteen. Also mentioned are his sisters Alice and Maudlin, brother George, cousin Jerome Baldwin, servants Anne Braunche, Katherine Evered, Robert Preston, and William Aby; along with son-in-law George Davies' children, and widow Mary Braunche.

In a probate-related document dated 13 September 1602, it is mentioned that Thomas Aldwyn had lived at Croxley Hall in Rickmansworth.

Children of Thomas Aldwyn, all presumably born at Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire:

- i. a daughter, who married George Davies and was perhaps deceased by 1592.
- ii. Nicholas, perhaps the man of that name baptized 1564 at Rickmansworth, and perhaps the father of Frances, bp. there 27 December 1599. He is mentioned in a bill for the town of Watford on 22 April 1612.^[22] His probate administration bond is dated 2 October 1615, and mentions his widow Katherine, and is witnessed by brother Alexander.

²⁰ Lincolnshire Records Office, Will of Thomas Aldwyn of Rickmansworth, 1 September 1592.

²¹ Transcripts of Parish Registers: Rickmansworth, *The Herts Genealogist and Antiquary*, 3(1809):159.

²² Lincolnshire Records Office, Manorial Records of Watford, reference 9936.

- iii. Charles, born say 1570; m. Mary Fotherley, daughter of Thomas Fotherley, marriage license dated 15 January 1595/6, Rickmansworth.^[23] He was buried 6 August 1630 at Rickmansworth.²⁴
- iv. Alexander, bp. 1572, Rickmansworth. He witnessed brother Nicholas' probate bond on 2 October 1615. He was an appraiser on the estate inventory of his brother-in-law John Beckett on 19 February 1618/9 at Watford.
Children of Alexander, bp. At Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire:
 - a. Charles, bp. 15 October 1598, bur. 17 October 1598.
 - b. Sarah, bp. 19 December 1599.
- v. James, born say 1574 (under 20 in 1592, father's will).
- vi. Sarah, born say 1577 (under 18 in 1592, father's will).
- vii. **ANNE**, born say 1579, under 18 in 1592. She married John Beckett, 27 November 1603, at Watford, Hertfordshire.
- viii. Jerome, bp. 28 October 1581 at Rickmansworth.

SUMMARY OF THE MARY BECKETT RESEARCH FINDINGS

The names, ages, geography and chronology of the Mary Beckett, daughter of John Beckett of Watford, Hertfordshire, are all consistent with what is known of the *Anne* passenger who came to Plymouth in 1623 and later married George Soule. The apparent association in England with families named Alden, and the close vicinity of the Warrens is tantalizing, and the lack of any further record of Mary in England adds some additional credence to the hypothesis. Yet no absolutely conclusive document or indication was uncovered that could prove the connection was found, nor were any documents uncovered that conclusively tied the Aldens of the region to John Alden of the *Mayflower*. Watford and most Hertfordshire records that could have provided such evidence have been fairly exhaustively searched, including a thorough examination of the voluminous manorial records of Watford.

²³ Joseph Lemuel Chester and Joseph Foster, eds., *London Marriage Licenses, 1521-1869* (London, 1887), 18.

²⁴ Transcripts of Parish Registers: Rickmansworth, *The Herts Genealogist and Antiquary*, 3(1809):170.