

THE ENGLISH ANCESTRY OF  
EDWARD<sup>1</sup> PORTER OF ROXBURY,  
HIS SISTER, ELIZABETH (PORTER) JOHNSON, AND  
THEIR COUSIN, ELIZABETH (DOWELL) PAYSON

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In 1951, the late G. Andrews Moriarty published material relevant to the immigrant Edward Porter of Roxbury and Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>[1]</sup> Although Mr. Moriarty noted that Edward Porter was born about 1610, and that Elizabeth Porter who married Captain Isaac Johnson of Roxbury in 1637 was "apparently, his sister," he provided no evidence for such a connection. Confirmation of the relationship was found in the will of Elizabeth Porter's husband, Captain Isaac Johnson, dated 28 June 1675, in which the testator called Edward Porter his "brother."<sup>[2]</sup>

Contemporary Roxbury church records indicate that the immigrant, Edward Porter, arrived in the colonies in 1636, with two children, John, aged 3, and William, aged 1.<sup>[3]</sup> Porter's wife is not mentioned in the Roxbury church records, but we know from a later deed that her given name was Anna.<sup>[4]</sup>

A likely immigrant with the Porters in 1636 was one Elizabeth Dowell, an unmarried maid servant, who joined the Roxbury church about the same time as Edward Porter. She married at Roxbury, in April 1637, Giles Payson, who had arrived in 1635 from Nazeing, Essex. Porter's own sister, Elizabeth, also probably arrived in New England in 1636, as she married at Roxbury, early the next year, Captain Isaac Johnson, a native of Great Amwell, Hertfordshire.<sup>[5]</sup>

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1. *The American Genealogist* [hereinafter TAG], 27(1951):19-21.
2. Mary Lovering Holman, *Ancestry of Colonel John Harrington Stevens and his wife, Frances Helen Miller* (2 vols., Concord, N.H., 1948) [hereinafter *Stevens-Miller*], 322-323.
3. Roxbury Land and Church Records, *Sixth Report of the Boston Record Commissioners* [hereinafter BRC 6], (2nd ed., Boston, 1884), 82.
4. *Suffolk County Deeds* (14 vols., Boston, 1880-1906), 8:425.
5. BRC 6:82; *Vital Records of Roxbury, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849* (2 vols., Salem: Essex Institute, 1925-1926) [hereinafter *Roxbury VRs*], 2:223, 311, 326.

A study of early Roxbury migration patterns indicates that many of the early immigrants who arrived there in the 1630s came from parishes scattered along the common border of Hertfordshire and Essex. Among these immigrants were Reverend John Eliot and his brother Philip Eliot, Edward Dennison, Isaac and William Heath, John Johnson, William Chandler, Giles and Edward Payson, Robert Burnap, and many others.<sup>16</sup> The present writer was not surprised, therefore, to find in the registers of Ware, Hertfordshire—a parish located approximately 3½ miles from the Essex border—a pair of siblings named Edward and Elizabeth Porter, baptized there in 1609 and 1611 respectively. Given the name, dates and location, this brother and sister appeared to be likely prospects for the immigrants, Edward and Elizabeth Porter.

Subsequent research has confirmed the identification. Edward Porter of Ware, Hertfordshire, married in 1632, at nearby Chelmsford, Essex, Anne Elliot, with whom he had sons, John, baptized in 1633, and William, baptized in 1635. The names and ages of this family, as well as Edward Porter's occupation—chandler—are a perfect match with the immigrant's family. Proof was also found that Elizabeth Porter of Ware, sister of Edward, was alive and unmarried in 1630. This is consistent with what is known of the immigrant's sister, who did not marry until 1637, after she arrived in New England.

Since immigrants typically had other relatives in New England, the extended family of Edward and Elizabeth Porter of Ware was searched to see if any other relatives might have come here. Edward and Elizabeth Porter of Ware had a first cousin named Elizabeth Dowell, baptized there in 1609, who may well be the maid servant of that name who joined the Roxbury church about 1636. The immigrant Elizabeth Dowell had her last child in 1648, which is compatible with the 1609 baptismal date of the Porter cousin, Elizabeth Dowell. The surname Dowell, moreover, is a rare one.

Results of additional research undertaken to trace the ancestry of the Porter and Dowell families in English records are given below. The Porter family is treated first, followed by sections on the allied families of Plomer and Allott / Allett. The ancestry of Elizabeth (Dowell) Payson will be found in the Allott section, as her mother was an Allott.

6. Charles Edward Banks, *Topographical Dictionary of English Emigrants to New England, 1620-1650* (Philadelphia, 1937), 39-54, 66-72.

## PORTER FAMILY

1. [REVEREND] ROBERT<sup>B</sup> PORTER, the earliest known progenitor of this family, was born say 1547, in England, and he was buried at Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire, 21 February 1623/4, styled "parson" in his burial record.<sup>[7]</sup> He married, probably about 1575 (assuming she was his first wife), MARGARET PLOMER, who was buried at Watton-at-Stone 30 October 1610, as Margaret, wife of Robert Porter, clerk. At Michaelmas term, 1591, a fine was recorded naming among others Margaret Porter, wife of Robert Porter, clerk. Involved were a mesuage and lands in Hertford and Amwell, conveyed by John Downe and Susan his wife to James Lawrence, with a warranty against Margaret Porter wife of Robert Porter clerk, Grace Gladwyn, and Elizabeth Man the wife of Andrew Man and the heirs of the said Margaret, Grace, and Elizabeth.<sup>[8]</sup> Margaret Porter, Grace Gladwyn, and Elizabeth Man evidently had an interest of some type in the property concerned. They were probably all three sisters, for both Grace Gladwyn and Elizabeth Man were named Plomer at the time of their marriages, which occurred in the same parish. See "Plomer Family," below.

Robert Porter matriculated pensioner from Pembroke College at Cambridge University, at Easter, 1563. He received a B.A. degree in 1566-7, an M.A. from Trinity College in 1570, and a B.D. in 1577. He was ordained a deacon in the diocese of Ely, 21 September 1567, and as a priest in the diocese of Lincoln, 8 May 1569. He was rector of Langham, Essex, 1571-2, and vicar of Standon, Hertfordshire, 1572-5, and he served as rector of the parish of Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire, where he lived from 1571 until his death in 1624.<sup>[9]</sup>

Sometimes called clerk and sometimes minister, Robert Porter signed as witness to several wills, including those of George Dowell (dated 1572, proved 15 Sept. 1572), Robert Grene of Standon (dated 8 May 1573, proved 14 Sept. 1573), William Thistell, yeoman, of Standon (dated 28 Sept. [year missing], proved 14 Dec. 1574), Jane Woorten (dated 8 March 1574/5, proved 4 July 1575), and Thomas Bedell,

7. Watton-at-Stone Parish Registers, FHL microfilm 991,344.

8. *Hertfordshire Genealogist & Antiquary*, 3 (1899): 96. A warranty in such cases is defined as "undertaking by the grantor of land, etc., on behalf of himself and his heirs, to defend the title of the grantee and his heirs or assigns" (Cecil R. Humphery-Smith, *A Genealogist's Bibliography* [Chichester, 1985], 112).

9. John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 1 (Cambridge, 1924), 382.

wheeler of Watton at Stone (dated 26 May 1584).<sup>[10]</sup> He also served as witness to the 1592 will of his brother-in-law, Andrew Goodman alias Manne, of Hertford, abstracted below (p. 58).

In his own will, its date missing but proved in 1624, witnessed by Francis Stuke and Maurice Thomsone, "Robert Porter of Watton at Stone, parson, being sick in body", gave:

... unto the poore of Watton 20s and halfe a quarter of wheate to be made in bread ... unto my two Godchildren vzt An Stuke 13s 4d & Grace Conaway [her name crossed out] ... to Robert Chandler, 13s 4d ... unto Alce my servant 20s and all my wearing apparell . . . . unto Agnis Chandler 20s ... unto Steven Wilson and Goodwife Shambrooke for attending aboute me ... 10s a peece. The residue of all my goods and chattelles I give unto my sonn William whome I doe ordayne my sole exequtor to discharge my debtes and funerall expences.<sup>[11]</sup>

The will was proved 17 March 1623/4 by Mathew Sutor on behalf of William Porter, with bondsmen Adrian Porter of Ware and Christopher Browne of Hertford. The inventory, totaling £31 15s 4d, taken 23 February 1623/4 by Thomas Bent and John Sigin, included goods in the parlour, the chamber next to the parlour, the hall, the great chamber, the buttery, and the kitchen.

Children, last four bp. at Watton-at-Stone, Herts.; surname **Porter**:

- i. ANN, bp. not found; m. 3 May 1596, at Watton-at-Stone, EDWARD CHANDLER. He was probably the man of that name who was a church warden in the parish of Bennington, Herts., in 1614 and 1615.<sup>[12]</sup>

Children, bp. at Bennington, Herts.; surname **Chandler**.<sup>[13]</sup>

1. William, bp. 10 April 1599. 2. John, bp. 14 June 1607.
3. Agnes, bp. 2 Sept. 1610. 4. Mary, bp. 23 Jan. 1613/14.
5. Richard, bp. 20 June 1619. ?6. Robert, named in Robert Porter's will.
- ii. ELIZABETH, bp. 24 March 1581/2.
- iii. WILLIAM, bp. 23 June 1583; living in 1624, when he was the residuary legatee and executor of his father's will.
2. iv. ADRIAN<sup>^</sup>, bp. 13 Feb. 1585/6; m. (1) ELIZABETH ALLOTT / ALLETT, (2) AGNES / ANNIS ( ) .
- v. JOHN, bp. 9 July 1587; bur. at Watton-at-Stone 10 Nov. 1597.

10. *Hertfordshire Genealogist & Antiquary*, 1 (1895): 334, 375, 376; 2 (1897): 38, 310.

11. Archdeaonry of Huntingdon, Hitchin Division, 100 HW 51, on FHL microfilm 1,537,549.

12. Bishops Transcript for Bennington, FHL microfilm 569,709.

13. Bennington Parish Registers, on FHL microfilm 991,329.

2. ADRIAN<sup>A</sup> PORTER (Robert<sup>B</sup>) was baptized 13 February 1585/6 at Watton-at-Stone, Hertfordshire, and he died after 17 March 1623/4, when he served as a bondsman at the probate of his father's estate. He presumably died soon afterwards, but record of his burial has not been found. He married, first, 28 April 1606, at Ware, Hertfordshire, ELIZABETH ALLOTT / ALLETT, the daughter of Robert and Joan ( ) Allott of that parish. (See "Allott / Allett Family," below.) Elizabeth was baptized at Ware 17 March 1582/3, and buried there 28 March 1617. Adrian married, second, by March 1617/8, AGNES / ANNIS ( ) , who was buried at Ware 17 January 1630/1.<sup>[14]</sup> Agnes evidently a widow at the time of her marriage to Adrian Porter; in her will she named a daughter, Lydia Miller, but whether this was Lydia's maiden or married name has not been learned.

Adrian Porter served as a witness to the will of Barnabie Kinge of Ware, dated 23 August 1615 and proved 22 September 1615.<sup>[15]</sup> Another witness to the same will, Isaac Heath, subsequently immigrated to New England.<sup>[16]</sup>

"Agnise Porter of Ware widdow In the County of Hertford being sicke in bodye but in perfect memory" in her will dated 22 December 1630, signed by mark in the presence of Christopher Brown, Isaac Heath, and Robert Dowell, proved 1 March 1630/1, bequeathed:<sup>[17]</sup>

... unto Elizabeth Porter and Susan Porter my husbands daughters one chest of linen alre dy set aparte for them to be equally devided within 2 monthes after my death & also to Ellizabeth the best fether bed I doe own & two fether pillowes & the best flock bolster & the best standing bedstead & two blanketts & the best chafin dishe & the best pot posnit. ... to Susan Porter aforenamed the worst fether bed & one fether bolster & two fether pillows and the tapestry [fio?]ringe & two blankets. ... unto John Porter my eldest sonne £15 out of my estate to be Imployed for the putting of him forthe to prentice & the over plus if there be any to be payd unto him at one & twenty yeares of age. Also I give him my second bedstead in the chamber over the street and one payr of flaxen sheets & the best flock bed & the greate brasse morter & the pestell. ... unto William Porter

14. In Agnes's burial record, the name "Mary Porter" is crossed out and "Annis Porter" written in. Her will provides evidence that she was the mother of her son William Porter, but in the record of his baptism in 1620, she is called Mary. The name first entered in the burial record may have been copied from the earlier baptismal record in the parish register.

15. *Hertfordshire Genealogist & Antiquary*, 3 (1899): 86.

16. See Douglas Richardson, "The Heath Connection: English Origins of Isaac and William Heath of Roxbury, Massachusetts ...," in the *Register*, 146 (1992): 261-278.

17. Essex Record Office, D/ABW 50/101.

my yongest sonne £15 to be Imployed for the puting him forthe & bringing of him up which £15 to be taken out of my estate. ... unto my daughter Lyddia Miller all my warring apparrill woollen & linine & my best fether bed & one payr of cloth blankets & the best woollen koverlid & two fether pillows & one fether bolster & the bedstead in the study & the brass pot & the middell kettell and the table in the great chamber & 4 joyned stooles belonging therto & one of my books which she will. ... all the rest of my goods unbequeathed shalbe sowld by my executour & the legases being payd out of my estate and funerall expenses & other dets discharged all the overpluss to be equallye devided between Edward Porter my husbands sonne & my two sonnes John & William Porter & also I doe make Edward Porter my husbands sonne my full & whole executoure of this my last testament...

Children, bp. at Ware, Herts.; surname Porter,<sup>[18]</sup>

with first wife, Elizabeth Allott:

- i. ROBERT, bp. 22 Feb. 1606/7; bur. at Ware 27 June 1608.
3. ii. EDWARD<sup>1</sup>, bp. 5 March 1608/9; m. (1) ANNE / ANNA ELLIOTT, (2) RHODA ( ) (GORE) REMINGTON.
- iii. ELIZABETH<sup>1</sup>, bp. 10 Feb. 1610/11; d. suddenly, 15 Aug. 1683/4 at Roxbury, Mass. Unmarried and living in England 22 Dec. 1630, when she was mentioned in the will of her step-mother, Agnes Porter, she probably came to New England in 1636 with her brother Edward Porter. She m. at Roxbury, Mass., 20 Jan. 1636/7, Captain ISAAC JOHNSON, son of (Mr.) John Johnson of Roxbury and his first wife, Mary Heath. Isaac was bp. at Great Amwell, Herts., 11 Feb. 1615/6, and immigrated with his father to New England in 1630. He became a freeman in Roxbury, 4 March 1636/7. He was Captain of the Roxbury company in 1653; Lieutenant of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in 1665, and was made its Captain in 1667. He was killed commanding his company, 19 Dec. 1675, at the taking of Fort Narragansett.<sup>[19]</sup>

Children, b. at Roxbury, Mass.; surname Johnson:<sup>[20]</sup>

1. Elizabeth, b. 24 Dec. 1637; m. at Roxbury, 20 Dec. 1658 Henry Bowen.
2. John, b. 3 Nov. 1639; d. at Roxbury, 20 Dec. 1661.
3. Mary, b. 24 April 1642; m. at Roxbury, 17 Dec. 1663, William Bartholomew.
4. Isaac, b. 7 Jan. 1643/4; m. 26 Oct. 1669, Mary Harris.
5. Joseph, b. Oct. 1645; d. at Roxbury 12 Dec. 1645.

18. Ware Parish Registers, FHL microfilm 991,326.

19. *Roxbury VRs*, 2: 223, 536; *BRC* 6:172, 177, 184. No explanation has yet been found for the fact that Capt. Isaac Johnson in his will named John Weld as his cousin (Holman, *Stevens-Miller*), but see note 28.

20. Holman, *Stevens-Miller*, 1:322-324; *Roxbury VRs*, 1:194-195, 2:223-224, 563.

6. *Nathaniel*, b. 1 May 1647; d. at Woodstock, Conn., 14 Feb. 1698/9; m. at Roxbury, 29 April 1667, Mary Smith, daughter of Lawrence and Mary ( ) Smith.

iv. *JOAN*, bp. 1 Nov. 1612; evidently d. young as she is not mentioned in the 1630 will of her stepmother, Agnes Porter.

v. *MARY*, bp. 1 Jan. 1613/4; bur. at Ware 13 June 1616.

vi. *SUSAN*, bp. 31 March 1616; living, unmarried, 22 Dec. 1630, when she was mentioned in the will of her stepmother, Agnes Porter.

with second wife, Agnes / Annis \_\_\_\_\_, both living 22 Dec. 1630 when they were named in her will:

vii. *JOHN*, bp. 1 March 1617/8.

viii. *WILLIAM*, bp. 9 Aug. 1620, "son of Adrian and Mary" (see note 14).

3. *EDWARD*<sup>1</sup> *PORTER* (*Adrian*<sup>A</sup>, *Robert*<sup>B</sup>) was baptized at Ware, Hertfordshire, 5 March 1608/9, and he died at Boston, Massachusetts, in 1677, between 28 July when he made his will and 3 August when it was proved. In 1630, he was mentioned in the will of his stepmother, Agnes Porter, and named executor of her estate. As Edward Porter "of Ware," he married, first, 1 October 1632, at Chelmsford, Essex, *ANNE* / *ANNA ELLIOTT*,<sup>[21]</sup> who died after 13 June 1674 when she signed a deed with her husband in Boston, Massachusetts.<sup>[22]</sup> Her parentage has not yet been learned, but she was probably related in some way to the immigrant, Reverend John Eliot (1604-1690), of Widford, Hertfordshire, and Nazeing, Essex, and perhaps also to Governor John Haines (1594-1654) of Old Holt in the parish of Messing, Essex, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut, whose paternal grandmother was an Elliott of Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire.<sup>[23]</sup> Following their marriage, Edward and Anne resided first in his home parish of Ware, and then at Chelmsford, Essex. At the baptism of his second child in 1635, he was called Edward Porter, chandler.

Edward Porter immigrated to New England in 1636, with his wife and two children. On 17 May 1637 he became a freeman, and he was a Deputy from Roxbury in 1638/9. His name appears on a list of persons and estates in Roxbury, 1634-43, as holding 27 acres. He was mentioned in the 1640 will of Mr. George Alcock of Roxbury and the 1646 will of Joseph Weld of Roxbury.<sup>[24]</sup>

21. Chelmsford Parish Registers, FHL microfilm 1, 472,064.

22. *Suffolk Deeds*, 8:425.

23. *Register*, 48 (1894): 385-402.

24. *Register*, 3 (1849): 95; 2 (1848): 53, 104; 7 (1853): 33.