

Family Legends and the Search for Anne Gower (Gouer)

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John Endecott



Weymouth Memorial

Governor John Endecott (1588-1665) of the Massachusetts Bay Colony has been dead for nearly 350 years and took some secrets of his family to his grave. One of these secrets concerned his first wife, who died about a year after the *Abigail* brought the Governor, his wife, and 30 others to the shores of the Massachusetts Bay and landed at Neumkeag on September 6, 1628. Who was she? It was not Anne Gower (Gouer).

Even before the sailing of the *Abigail* with the Governor's party on June 20, 1628, there was documentation related to the upcoming journey that a wife would come with the Governor. The *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* contain an entry on February 23, 1628,¹ nearly three months before the journey, that Captain Endecott, his wife, and persons in his company will be on the voyage from Weymouth to Neumkeag. Jacob Bailey Moore, author of the *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay* states, "accompanied by his wife and family."²

In the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Volume I, 1847, there is a statement which identifies the wife where it says "the Governor had married Anne Gower before leaving England and that she died in 1629."³ These statements are also shown in the work of Sir Roper Lethbridge, *The Devonshire Ancestry and Early Homes of the Family of John Endecott, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay, 1629*.⁴ These accounts provide

insufficient evidence of the presence of Anne Gower on the voyage and her marriage to the Governor.

¹ Shurtleff, Nathaniel B., MD. *The Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* (Boston: From the Press of William White, Printer to the Commonwealth, 1853). 25. The entry February 23, 1628 shows: "This day a Warrant, etc., in part of freight of the ---Henry Gawden, Master, from Waimouth to Nahumkeke --- besides ye charge of Captain John Endecott, his wife --- and persons his company, their passage and dyett."

² Moore, Jacob Bailey. *Lives of the Governors of New Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay*. (New York: Gates and Stedman, Publishers, 116 Nassau Street, 1848). 348.

³ Cogswell, William, Ed. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, Volume I. (Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1847). 203.

⁴ Lethbridge, Sir Roper. *Hands Across the Sea. The Devonshire Ancestry and the Early Homes of the Family of John Endecott, Governor of the Massachusetts Bay, 1629 with Illustrations*. (Exeter: W. J. Southwood & Co., Catherine Street, 1912). 25.

Some other historical accounts showing Anne Gower as the wife of Governor Endecott include: Charles M. Endicott's *Memoir of John Endecott* (1847);⁵ Salisbury's *Memorial of John Endicott* (1847);⁶ Bolton's *The Portraits* (1919)⁷ and Mayo's *John Endecott, A Biography* (1936)⁸ These accounts also provide insufficient evidence.

Past and current research efforts to find the first marriage of Governor John Endecott have not met with success. This does not mean that a marriage did not take place of the Governor. In the 17th Century in England, the basic requirement for a legal marriage was the completion of a marriage contract.⁹ If the couple elected to follow this procedure then no marriage would have been recorded in any church. Assuming they brought the contract with them on the voyage to the Massachusetts Bay, its validity would have ended with the death of the Governor's wife in the winter of 1628-1629.

Matthew Craddock's letter to John Endecott February 16, 1628/9 says "to hear that my good cozen, your wife, were perfectly recovered of her health and would be acceptable newes to us all".¹⁰ Additionally, John Endecott's letter to Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Colony May 11, 1629¹¹ requesting the physician services of Mr. Fuller suggest that the wife of Governor Endecott likely was still living. Nonetheless, this still puts the death of Governor Endecott's wife in late winter, 1628-Spring 1629. Governor Endecott did remarry on August 18, 1630 to Elizabeth Gibson Cogan.¹² She arrived on the *Arbella*, with the Winthrop Fleet on June 13, 1630.¹³



⁵ Endicott, Charles Moses. [*Memoir of John Endecott. First Governor of the Massachusetts Bay*](#). (Salem: Printed at the Observor Office, 1847). 12. This memoir appeared in abstract form in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* Vol. I, July 1847, No. 3. Endicott suggests the wife of Governor Endecott as being a cousin to Matthew Craddock.

⁶ Salisbury, Stephen, President, Antiquarian Society. [*A Memorial of Governor John Endecott*](#). (Worcester, Mass: Printed by Charles Hamilton, 1874).

⁷ Bolton, Charles Knowles. [*The Portraits. Portraits of Person Born Abroad Who Came to the Colonies in North America Before the Year 1701*](#) With An Introduction, Biographical Outlines and Comments on the Portraits, Volume II. (The Boston Athenaeum, 1919). 385. It is here that it is mentioned ---- "and Endecott being related through the former (Roger Ludlow) through Ann, his wife ----by his first wife, Anne Gower is supposed to have had no children; by his second Mrs. Elizabeth Cogan Gibson."

⁸ Mayo, Lawrence Shaw. [*John Endecott. A Biography*](#). (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1936). 12.

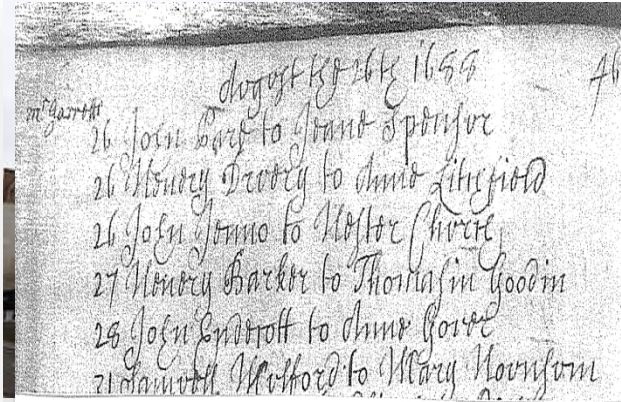
⁹ Brabcova, Alice. [*Marriage in Seventeenth Century England: The Woman's Story*](#). (University of West Bohemia: Published Manuscript by the Author, n.d.).

¹⁰ [*Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society Volume III, 2nd Series 2nd Edition*](#). (Boston: Printed by Nathan Hale, Congress Street, 1826). 116-120.

¹¹ Mayo. [*John Endecott. A Biography*](#). 20.

¹² John Endecott and Elizabeth Gibson Cogan marriage, August 18, 1630. Savage, James. [*The History of New England from 1630 to 1649 by John Winthrop, Esq. From His Original Manuscripts With Notes. Vol. I*](#). (Boston: Printed by Phelps and Farnham, No. 5 Court Street, 1825). 30.

¹³ The Winthrop Fleet. *Arbella*. <http://www.packrat-pro.com/ships/winthrop.htm> downloaded 9 March 2013.



Marriage record of John Endecott and Anne Gower

In the course of doing research during 2013 on the Governor's family in England, a discovery was made on a marriage bond for a John Endecott and Anne Gower at St. Katherine by the Tower in London, but the date of the marriage was August 28, 1688¹⁴, 60 years after the sailing of the Abigail in 1628. A close examination of the original record at the London Archives confirmed the marriage year as 1688.

Furthermore, the signature of John Endecott of London on his marriage allegation does not match the well known signature of John Endecott, Governor in the Massachusetts Bay.

Signature of Gov. John Endecott



Signature of John Endecott of London

Previous research has shown that this John Endecott (b.1657)¹⁵ was the eldest son of Doctor Zerubbabel Endecott (1635-1684)¹⁶ who was, in turn, the second son of Governor John Endecott (1588-1665).¹⁷

St. Olave

Like his father, John (b. 1657), had become a doctor, probably studying under this father and decided to leave New England and settle in London to practice medicine. There, he met and married Anne Gower. She soon was pregnant and delivered a baby girl, Anne Endecott, who was christened at St. Olave on Hart Street in London on October 13, 1689.¹⁸ Either during childbirth or shortly thereafter, Anne Gower probably died. Nothing more has been found in the records.

¹⁴ John Endecott and Ann Gover Marriage, August 20, 1688. London and Surrey, England Marriage Bonds and Allegations 1597-1921. London Metropolitan Archives.

¹⁵ Endicott, Charles Moses, Esq. of Salem. *The Endicott Family*. (Frankfort, Penna: Martin and Allardyce, 1911). 1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Church of England. Anne Endecott christening, October 13, 1689. St. Olave Church Parish Records, Hart Street, London.

Shortly after the loss of Ann Gower, Dr. Endecott found a new wife and married Ann Edwards in 1690.¹⁹ She took over as the mother of his infant daughter. The couple continued to live in London and she produced a son, Robert Edwards Endecott, who was christened at St. Olave on April 11, 1693.²⁰ The family planned to continue their life in London, but Dr. John Endecott died ca. 1694²¹ at the young age of 38. His will is dated August 12, 1689.²² An interesting note about this will is that it was written during his outward bound voyage from England to New England. Dr. John Endecott in his will, further states that he leaves to his wife, Ann, during the term of her natural life, orchards in the Salem Village in New England that were willed to him in the Last Will and Testament of his late father, Zerubbabel Endicott.... “towards the maintenance of herself and her child she now gets from child (whether it be male or female)”.... “if his wife or child does not survive him, then go to his brother, Samuel Endicott.”²³ This confirms that at the time of this will being written, that Ann Gower was pregnant with their first born, Ann on October 13, 1689. Why he was going to New England is unknown.

After the death of her husband, Ann Edwards Endecott, decided to leave England and come to Salem, Massachusetts. Ann had a brother, John Edwards, residing in Boston.²⁴ With her was step-daughter Ann Endecott, and her son, Robert Edwards Endecott. Both children grew up in Salem on Orchard Farm.²⁵ Ann Endecott born 1689 married her cousin, Capt. Samuel Endecott in Salem on December 20, 1711^{26 27} and her half-brother Robert Edwards Endecott married Elizabeth Phillips in Salem on November 24, 1720.^{28 29} Ann went on to have five children. They were John (1713).³⁰ He died on May 17, 1783 and is buried in the Endicott Cemetery in Danvers, MA³¹;

¹⁹ John Endecott and Ann Edwards marriage. Harmon, Gordon S. *Endecott-Endicott Family History with Harmon Lineages – 22 Generations from 1327 to the Present. Nine Generations in England (1327-1627) and Beyond in America.* (Springfield, MO: GSH Visions, 2002). 16.

²⁰ Church of England. Robert Edwards Endicott christening, April 11, 1693. St. Olave Church Parish Records, Hart Street, London.

²¹ John Endecott death. Endicott. *The Endicott Family.* 1.

²² John Endecott will, 1689. Public Record Office, The National Archives Prob/11/429, London.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Harmon, Gordon S. [*Governor John Endecott's Burial; Mystery Resolved.*](#) (Springfield, MO: GSH Visions, Revised, 2012). 5-6.

²⁵ Orchard Farm was passed down through the Endecott family beginning with the will of Governor John Endecott, to his son Dr. Zerubbabel Endecott to his son Dr. John Endecott to his son, Robert and daughter Anne. Anne with her marriage to her cousin Samuel lived, with her children on Orchard Farm. The family ownership of Orchard Farm is well documented in the work of Charles Moses Endecott, *The Endicott Family.* See footnote 41.

²⁶ *New England Historical and Genealogical Register.* Vol. LXXI. Whole Number, 281. (Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, 1917). 93.

²⁷ Samuel Endicott and Anne Endecott marriage, December 20, 1711. Endicott. *The Endicott Family.* 2.

²⁸ *Register,* 93.

²⁹ Robert Edwards Endecott and Elizabeth Phillips marriage November 24, 1720. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register.* Vol. LXXI. January, 1917. Whole Number, 93.

³⁰ John Endecott birth, 1713. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849. Volume I – Births. (Salem, Mass: Published by the Essex Institute 1916). 281.

³¹ Endicott, William Crowninshield, Jr. [*Memoir of Samuel Endicott With a Genealogy of His Descendants.*](#) (Boston, Massachusetts: Privately Printed, 1924) 81.

Sarah (1715)³², who died before 1719;³³ Samuel (1717)³⁴; Sarah (1719)³⁵ and, Robert (1721).³⁶ Ann died in May, 1723 at age 30.³⁷ She is buried at the Endicott Cemetery in Danvers, MA.³⁸ Robert and his wife Elizabeth left no children.³⁹

From all of this, what can we conclude? First, the family tradition that the first wife of Governor John Endecott was Anne Gower is probably incorrect. Someone as early as 1847 or before had made a mistake and concluded that John who was the grandson was John the grandfather and that family lore continued for many years. Several published works perpetuated this family lore. We can also say that the name Anne Gower never does appear in the list of passengers for the *Abigail* but says “wife” of the Governor. Furthermore, in the work of the Mary and John Clearinghouse in their work on the passengers of the *Abigail* states, “Mrs. Anne Endicott, wife.”⁴⁰ Finally, however, we can say that Anne Gower Endecott did make it to New England through her only daughter and lives on today through the descendant families of her surviving children.⁴¹

The image of John Endecott has been reproduced with permission granted by Susan Greendyke Lechre, Arts Collection Manager, Massachusetts Arts Commission, State House, Boston, MA. This portrait is on display in the Governors’ Portrait Gallery.

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³² Sarah Endecott birth, 1715. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849. Volume I – Births. (Salem, Mass: Published by the Essex Institute 1916). 281.

³³ Endicott. *The Endicott Family*. 2.

³⁴ Samuel Endecott birth, 1717. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849. Volume I – Births. (Salem, Mass: Published by the Essex Institute 1916). 281.

³⁵ Sarah Endecott birth, 1719. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849. Volume I – Births. (Salem, Mass: Published by the Essex Institute 1916). 281.

³⁶ Robert Endecott birth, 1721. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1848. Volume I – Births. (Salem, Mass: Published by the Essex Institute, 1916). 281.

³⁷ Ann Endecott death, 1723. Endicott. *The Endicott Family*. 2.

³⁸ Endicott. *Memoir of Samuel Endicott With a Genealogy of His Descendants*. 4.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Search for the Passengers of the Mary and John 1630*. Volume 20 West Country Ships and Passengers 1620-1643. Mary and John Clearinghouse.

⁴¹ One such example is that Governor John Endecott shows favor to his Grandson, John Endecott (later Surgeon of London) by leaving to him in his will (1659) L10 (ten pounds) when he turned 21. In addition, when Dr. Zerrubbel Endecott died, his will (1673) divided equal parts of Orchard Farm to his sons, Dr. John Endecott of London and Samuel Endecott. Furthermore, John Endecott made a partition on March 26, 1691 that passed Orchard Farm to his son, Robert Edwards Endecott (2/3) and daughter Ann Endecott (1/3).