

# BASILDON HERITAGE

*A Future for our Past*

## ***Hannah Lake – A founding Mother of America***



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## **Hannah Lake – A Founding Mother of America**



**In the seventeenth century, Essex and Suffolk was a hotbed of Puritans, created because of poor economic conditions, social stresses, religious and political turmoil that was plaguing England at the time. These problems motivated almost 400,000 people to leave British shores for the colonies in America.**

**Most people would have heard of the story of Christopher Martin of Great Burstead and the ship ‘Mayflower’ who sailed to America in 1620, landed in the area of Cape Cod and established a colony naming it Plymouth.**

**Then ten year later in 1630, following the dissolving of parliament by King Charles I, and with the worsening economic condition, many Puritan leaders decided to establish a godly colony in the “New World.” This colony would provide the economic and social security the Puritans craved but could not attain in England.**

**Over the next ten years, over 20,000 English men, women and children sailed to the new Massachusetts Bay Colony in what became**

known as the “Great Migration.” Many of the Puritans were men of authority and of considerable wealth, however, they did not intend to sever their connection with the existing Church of England but to reform the existing church by modelling communities in New England.

Fifteen-year-old Hannah Lake, with her mother Margaret (nee Reade), sister Martha, brother Thomas, aunt Elizabeth Winthrop (nee Reade) and uncle John Winthrop Jr. sailed in the ship “Abigail” to Massachusetts, arriving on 6 October 1635.

Hannah’s grandfather was Edmund Reade (Colonel) who was Baptised in Wickford on 23 May 1563 and married Elizabeth (nee Cooke) at Pebmarsh, Essex in 1594 following the death of his first wife Thomasin Wallenger who died in Wickford in 1592. Edmund held a considerable amount of land in the Wickford and surrounding area and his ancestry can be traced back in the area to at least the 1400’s. Although of minor gentry he was obviously a fairly wealthy man and this is borne out by his will of 1623, for example he gave twenty shillings to the poor of Wickford, five pounds to his servant John Weald and two shillings to his other servants. Most of his land etc went to his eldest son William but he made sure that the rest of his children were well catered for. He died on 1 December 1623 aged 60 and is buried in Wickford.

The land these settlers occupied in New England was the tribal homeland of native Indians. Where Hannah and her family landed was the homeland of the Wampanoag Indians. By 1637 the Massachusetts Bay Colony had conquered the various tribes in particular the Pequot Indians. John Winthrop Jr. was given substantial lands, when he later visited his lands, Margaret Lake joined him and assumingly her daughters went with them, believed to be the first women to set foot in the area that later became known as New England.

**It is not really known the reason why Margaret left England, did she want to pursue her Puritan beliefs, had there been a family rift but whatever the reason, she still tried to keep in touch with her husband John Lake. Her step-father, Rev. Hugh Peters, wrote from London to John Winthrop Jr. in 1654 to say “John Lake is alive and lusty” and again in 1657 saying “John Lake lives still,” though he died four years later.**



*North Benfleet's All Saints' Church*

**Hannah was baptised at North Benfleet's All Saints' church on 3 July 1621. The Lake family were yeoman farmers and had been for generations. Hannah's grandfather, John Lake Sr., served as juror for Barstable Hundred in the year of the Armada, 1588. John Lake Jr. owned lands in Nevendon and Basildon through his mother Elizabeth Sandel and later addition lands in Wickford and Rawreth, the dowry of his wife Margaret Reade, whom he married when she was eighteen and he twenty-six. John Lake Jr. had inherited Fanton Hall from his father, where Hannah would have spent much of her childhood.**



The Lakes as landowners were reasonably wealthy so it was very brave of Margaret to leave a comfortable life in England with her daughters to basically the unknown. Fortunately, they had the protection of her brother-in-law, John Wintrop Jr. who was to become Governor of Connecticut.

Hannah, her mother and sister were to live with the Winthrop's until Hannah and Martha married. Hannah was twenty-two when she married John Gallop in 1643 in John Winthrop's Jr. house in Boston. By marrying John Gallop, she became part of a famous frontier family whose contribution to the early colonisation of Boston was invaluable.

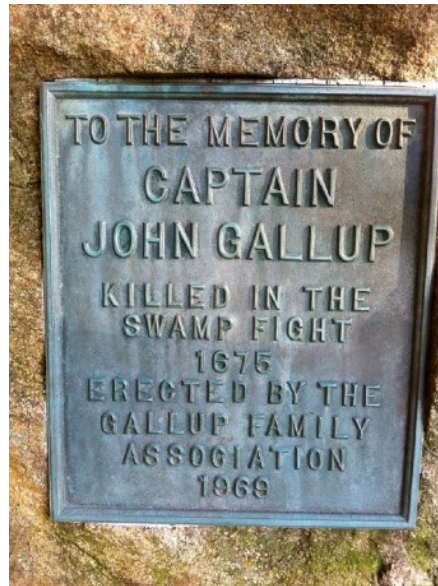
Hannah's father-in-law, John Gallop Sr. had arrived in the new world on the ship 'Mary & John' in 1630, he soon became the owner of a house and a wharf, which later became known as Gallop's point, Boston.

John Gallop fought in many of the frontier wars. Even today the citizens of the new England States consider him to have been a brave man. Following their marriage they moved from Boston to Taunton, part of the Plymouth colony, where the first of their ten children were born.

**John Gallop in 1651 following his father death inherited land granted by the Massachusetts bay Colony to veterans of the Pequot Wars. Then in 1654 they move with three of their children and settled on 300 acres of land given to them on the east bank of the Mystic River, preferring to make it their main dwelling place as it offered John a protected anchorage for his seafaring activities as well as good land for farming. This all sounds very idyllic, but frontier life was hard; Hannah would have had to be physically strong to survive childbearing and mentally strong to cope with isolation, uncertainty. As when the menfolk were away it was up to the wives to manage the homestead and at times defend it and Hannah would have been left alone for long periods while her husband was away fighting wars, leading supply wagons on trading expeditions and we must not forget the wolves which were a real danger.**

**However, they prospered and were awarded several more land grants. Hannah went on to produce seven more children. At the age of sixty John Jr. fought in the King's Philip's War of 1675-76 which raged through the towns and villages of new England. He had taken command of the First Company of Connecticut regiment and during the Great Swamp Fight on 19 December 1676, he lost his life when storming Narragansett Fortress and was buried at nearby Wickford in a mass grave near the battlefield.**

**Two of Hannah's sons, John and William, also fought in the King's Phillip's War, continuing a tradition that would see her grandsons, great-grandsons and great-great grandsons fight in the War of Independence and the American Civil War. Hannah's daughters to inherited their mother's fortitude, helping to carve out the American nation as it is today.**



**Hannah is buried in White Hall Graveyard, Mystic, on Rhode Island She died a respected and wealthy woman, whose descendants include: George Gallop, Inventor of the Gallup Poll, 6<sup>th</sup> great -grandson, Calvin Coolidge, 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. President, 1<sup>st</sup> cousin 8 times removed. Robert Frost, Poet and Playwright. 1<sup>st</sup> cousin 8 times removed. Lucretia (Rudolph) Garfield, First Lady of President James Garfield, 4<sup>th</sup> great-granddaughter. Jane (Appleton) Pierce, First Lady of President Franklin Pierce, 1<sup>st</sup> cousin 5 times removed. Emily Dickinson, American Poet, 5<sup>th</sup> great-granddaughter. Carole Lombard, Movie Actress, 1<sup>st</sup> cousin 10 times removed. Ex-Presidents George H.W. Bush, 7<sup>th</sup> great-grandson and George W. Bush, 8<sup>th</sup> great-grandson.**

**Hannah, sister Martha, mother Margaret and aunt Elizabeth are just four of the Essex women who had the courage to seek a new life in America and helped to open up its frontiers and they are one of ours.**



**Under this tomb rest the remains of Hannah Lake who came with her mother from Essex England in 1635. Married to John Gallop in Boston in 1643.**

**Footnote:**

**On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst unveiled at Wickford Library a Blue Plaque in Hannah's honour. Previously the members of the Basildon Borough Heritage Group visited the library to explain to the staff what was being organised and to our pleasant surprise Sarah Weeks-Jones one of the libraries senior assistances informed us that she is a descendant of our Hannah and at the unveiling Sarah said a few words and read out the following poem by her ancestor, Robert Frost:**

#### **The Road Not Taken**

**Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, Long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;**

**Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;**



Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference

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Ken Porter  
Basildon Borough Heritage Society  
2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

