

## **IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS ...**

# **EARLY SETTLERS OF HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS**

**James Davis  
(c. 1583 – 1679) /  
Bartholomew  
Heath  
(1611 – 1681) /  
Joseph Peaslee  
(c. 1600 – 1661)**

**— *Bradley Rymph***

**VISITS TO HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS:**

**September 22–23, 2012**

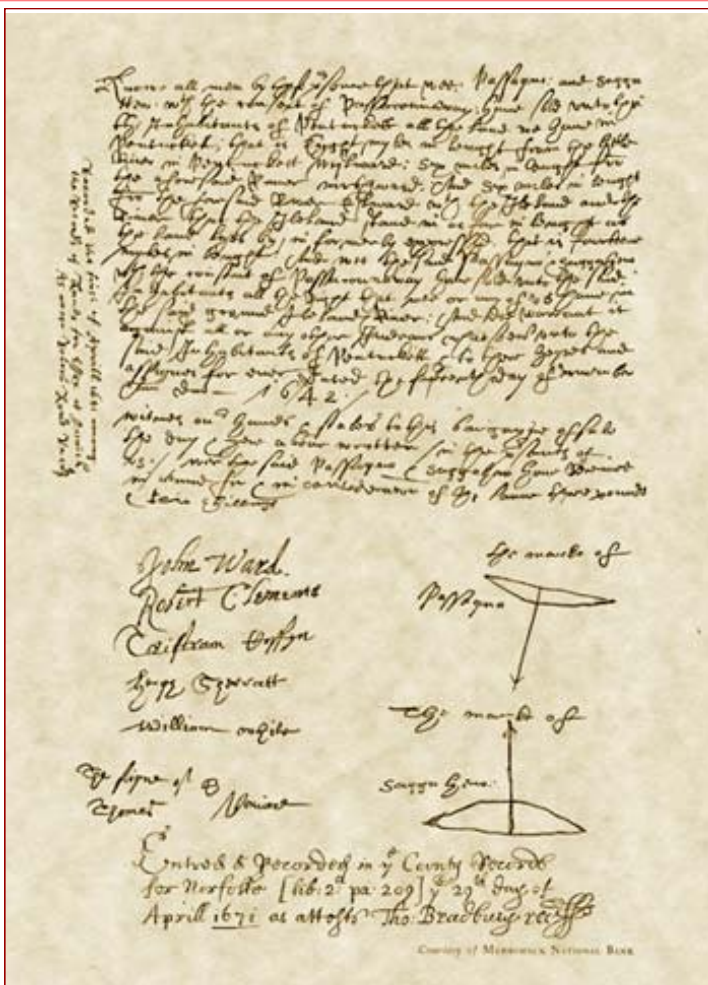
*Text and photos © 2012 by Bradley B. Rymph.*

Much uncertainty has existed in tracing the Heath branch of family ancestors. Moving back in time from Edna Mae (Heath) Rymph and her siblings, family genealogists have been able to trace the Heath-male line back only as far as her great-great-great-grandfather Caleb Heath, who was born October 26, 1769, in Northfield, New Hampshire. This tracing alone is somewhat impressive, in that it demonstrates that our Heath ancestors' presence on the North American continent goes back at least to the pre-Revolutionary War/late Colonial era. However, it does not shed light on which Heath ancestor actually immigrated to America from Britain, and when.

That is unfortunate. The strong likelihood is that Caleb himself descended from a Heath ancestor who came to this continent in the early 1600s as one of the early Puritan settlers. The records of early New England settlers name seven different male Heaths who sailed to and settled in Massachusetts or Connecticut before 1676. One of these male Heaths was probably one of Caleb's ancestors. We just do not know which one.

Nevertheless, we now can trace our ancestry — through a slightly different line — to one of those nine early Heath settlers. In October 1792, Caleb Heath married a woman named Susannah

Original deed to Haverhill, granting purchase of town site by the town's founders from the native Indian owners



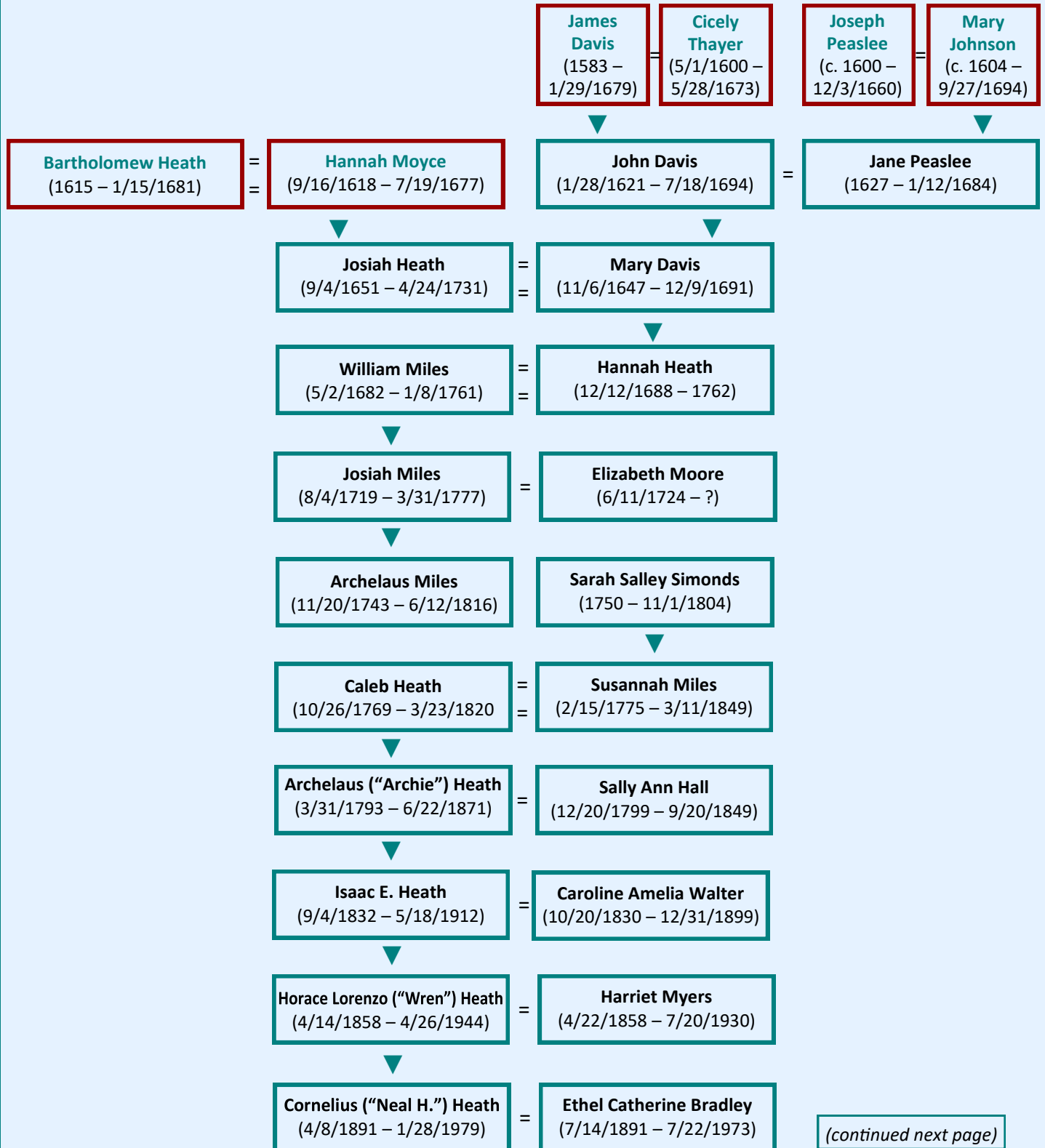
Miles. Unlike her husband's genealogy, Susannah's ancestry has been traced back to some of her immigrant roots — including **Bartholomew Heath** (1615–1681), who was one of the seven early male Heath immigrants to New England and was Susannah Miles' great-great-great-grandfather.

Bartholomew Heath was one of the earliest settlers of Haverhill, Massachusetts. Two other male ancestors of Susannah Miles, along with their families, were also among the early settlers of Haverhill — **James Davis** (c. 1583–1679) and **Joseph Peaslee** (c. 1600–1661).

Haverhill was founded in 1640 in northeastern Massachusetts Bay Colony by a Puritan minister named John Ward and 12 other Puritan men who had previously settled elsewhere in the colony — eight (including James Davis) from the town of Newbury and four from the town of Ipswich. The new settlement was originally known as "Pentucket," the name given to the area by the native Indians who already lived there. This initial band of 12 men began the work of clearing the forest and making a settlement. Haverhill was the 30th town established within what is now the state of Massachusetts and

# HOW WE'RE RELATED

The English immigrants James Davis and Cicely Thayer, and Joseph Peaslee and Mary Johnson, were my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents through my mother, Edna Mae Heath. Bartholomew Heath and Hannah Moyce were my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents.



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**Cornelius ("Neal H.") Heath**  
(4/8/1891 – 1/28/1979)

=

**Ethel Catherine Bradley**  
(7/14/1891 – 7/22/1973)



**Albert James Rymph**  
(11/9/1925 – 2/16/1928)

=

**Edna Mae Heath**  
(11/5/1928 – 9/10/2022)



**Bradley Budd Rymph**  
(*living*)

=

**José Verzosa Baquiran III**  
(*living*)

the 49th town within the whole of New England.

Apparently two years after the town's initial settlement — on November 15, 1642 — Haverhill's founders purchased a title to the town's land from the area's native Indian owners. One of the witnesses to the deed was James Davis's brother Thomas.

## JAMES DAVIS AND FAMILY

James Davis is believed to have been born sometime between 1583 and 1588 in Marlborough, Wiltshire County, England. He came to America with his wife, Cicely (Thayer) Davis, and their three oldest children — James, Jr., John (our ancestor), and Judith. They first settled in the Puritan village of Newbury, Massachusetts. In 1639, one year before helping to settle Haverhill, James Davis, Sr., received a land grant in Hampton, Massachusetts.

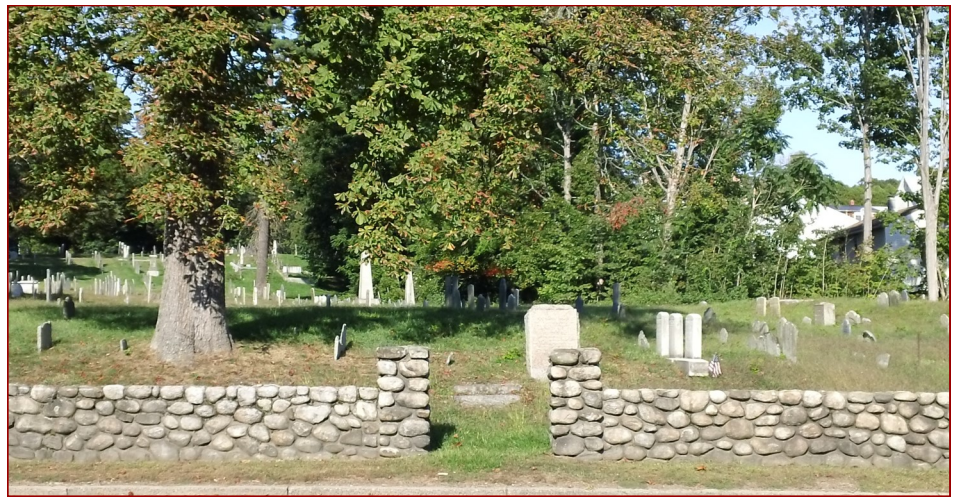
James Sr. was apparently a man of considerable wealth for his times. In 1643, he was one of three men in Haverhill who were worth over £200. Under a law passed in 1650, this level of wealth would have given him and his wife the right to wear gold or silver lace or buttons, silk hoods, ribbons, or scarfs. Anyone worth less than £200 was forbidden to wear such luxury items, under penalty of 10 shillings.

## Distant "Cousins"

*Notable figures in history who share descent with Haverhill, MA, early residents include:*

- ♦ John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892) — 19th century poet and abolitionist; great-great-great-grandson of Joseph and Mary (Johnson) Peaslee through their son Joseph, Jr.
- ♦ Ruth Elizabeth ("Bette") Davis (1908–1989) — 20th century actress; great-great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter of John and Mary (Johnson) Davis through their son James.





*Pentucket Cemetery, Haverhill — likely burial site of initial Davis and Heath settlers in the town. Monument at entrance to cemetery (photo on left) reads: Old Burying Ground / Site of the First Meeting / House of Haverhill / 1648 to 1699 / And of First School and Watch / House Erected 1670 / Here Lie the Remains of Most / of the Early Settlers of / Haverhill and Many of / Their Descendants.”*

In 1646, he paid the highest taxes of anyone in Haverhill. Town historical records record him as one of 32 landholders in the town in 1645, with his sons James, Jr., and John also listed among the landowners. After a second division of land was made among the community’s men in 1652, he had 10 acres of land. James, Jr., also had 10 acres, and John had 6. His brother Thomas had 8 acres.

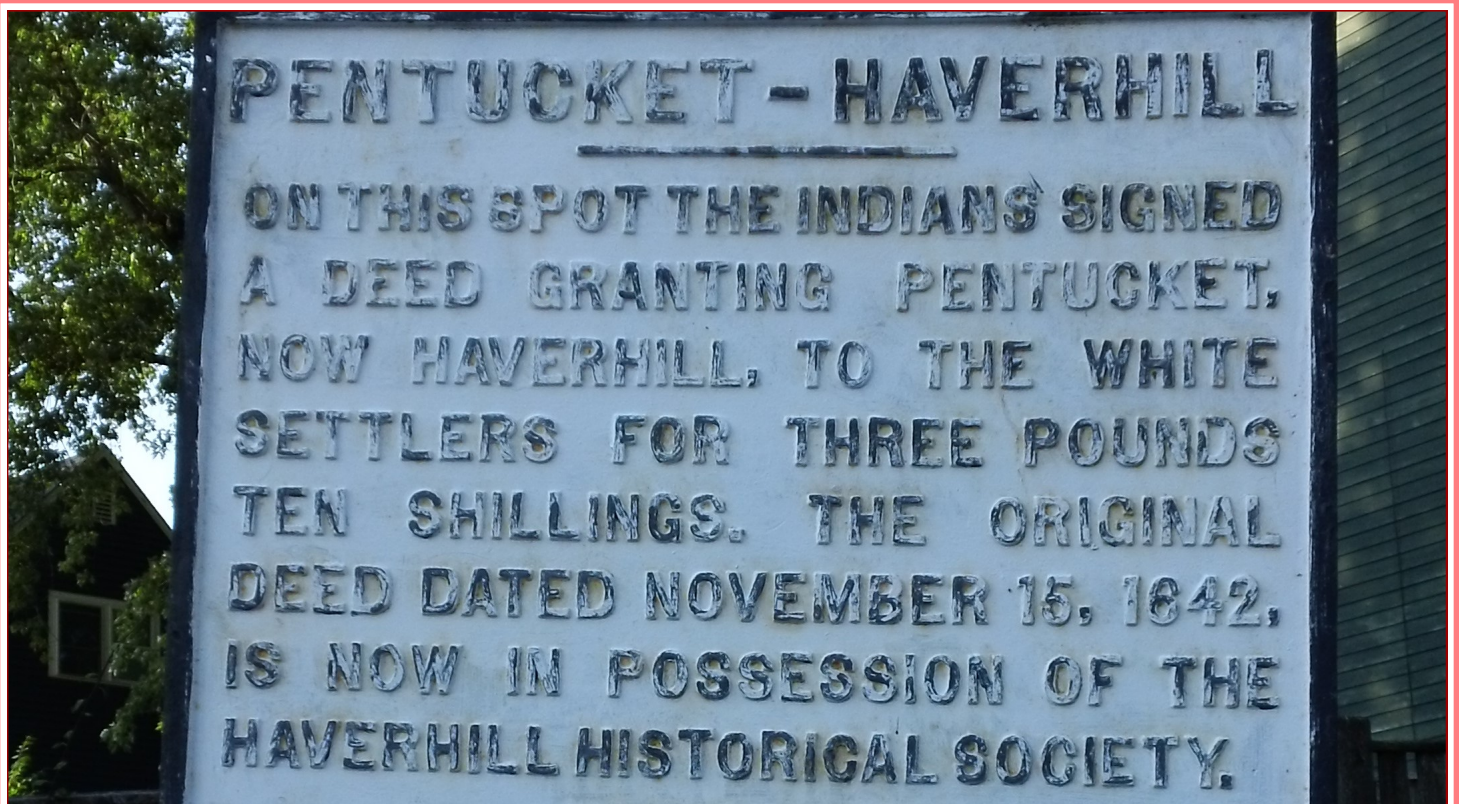
James Sr. was clearly a community leader in Haverhill. He served for many years in the position of “Commissioner to End Small Causes,” an office he had also filled while in Hampton. He was also a grand jury man, a representative (in 1660), and often served as one of the town’s selectmen.

James Sr. and his family were devout Puritans. In 1659 (more than 30 years before the famous Salem Witchcraft Trials), he and his son Ephraim accused a John Godfrey of witchcraft. Godfrey was acquitted of the charges. (Godfrey apparently had a difficult personality that frequently put him at odds with his neighbors. He was involved in numerous Massachusetts cases either as a plaintiff or defendant, including one additional trial in which he was accused and acquitted of witchcraft and another case when he charged a woman with witchcraft.)

## **JOSEPH PEASLEE AND FAMILY**

On December 10, 1646, John Davis, the son of James Davis, Sr., married Jane





Peaslee. She was the daughter of another of Haverhill's earliest settling couples — Joseph Peaslee, Sr., and his wife Mary (Johnson) Peaslee.

Joseph and Mary Peaslee immigrated to America from England sometime by 1638, accompanied by their two oldest children, daughters Jane and Mary. The family settled first in Newbury, Massachusetts, but by 1639 had moved to Hampton, New Hampshire. In 1641, they moved again to Salisbury, Massachusetts, then again across the Powow River to where Amesbury, Massachusetts, now exists. By 1645, the Peaslees had settled in Haverhill. With the Davises, Joseph Peaslee was one of the 32 landholders recorded for the community in that year.

Joseph's early moves likely were related to his religious beliefs, which were not fully consistent with strict Puritan doctrine. In fact, at some point, the Peaslees converted to (or at least became sympathetic to) Quakerism. While living in Salisbury, Joseph Peaslee apparently fell out of favor with the established church, and had to move across the river and out of that town's official jurisdiction. After this move, however, he continued to have problems with the established church, which extended its jurisdiction to the area where he had moved. This forced him to move further west.

By 1645, the Peaslees had settled in Haverhill. That year, Joseph was listed as one of the town's 32 landowners. He became a prosperous man, succeeding

as a millwright, a farmer, and a cattle rancher. He was thrice selected as one of the town's selectmen — in 1649, 1650, and 1653.

As the settlers of Haverhill increased in number, they felt that they should have their own church rather than have to travel to another town for worship. What followed became one of the initial colonial battles for independence of church and worship from state governance. Haverhill's residents began to meet at an unofficial "church" in their own settlement, with Joseph Peaslee and a Thomas Macy (of Salisbury) preaching the sermons. The General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony did not grant the settlers' request. Instead, on November 6, 1646, it declared:

Any person living within the limits of the colony of Massachusetts Bay who shall without cause, neglect to attend public worship shall forfeit for his absence from every said published meeting, five shillings.

In 1652, after the Court again forbade Peaslee and Macy from preaching in the absence of an approved pastor, a Salisbury landowner named Robert Pike declared, "such persons as did act in making that law, did break their oath to the country, for it is against the liberty of the country, both civil and

ecclesiastical." In reaction, the court disenfranchised and heavily fined Pike. When the court met the following May, numerous residents of not only Haverhill and Salisbury, but also Hampton, Newbury, and Andover, petitioned the Court to revoke Pike's sentence. James Davis, Joseph Peaslee, and Bartholomew Heath were all among the petition's signers. The court's officials declared that they were irate that "so many persons should combine together to present such an unjust and unreasonable request." It appointed a commission to assemble several of the petitioners "and require a reason of their very unjust request."

On May 26, 1658, the Court again ordered the residents of Haverhill and Salisbury not to worship in their own towns but instead:

[did] declare and order for the present, that they shall attend the worship of God together in the old town and that they contribute their several proportions for the maintenance and continuance of the same amongst them.

The residents of Haverhill and Salisbury continued to ignore the court order, and Peaslee refused to stop preaching. In 1659, the court fined him five shillings per week each time he violated their order and preached. A



compromise was initially reached, when the town's residents agreed to hire a nearby cleric to travel to their church and preach. However, some residents protested this arrangement and were ordered by the court to attend the traveling preacher's services. Joseph Peaslee and some other residents decided to ignore this order, just as they had earlier demands. The court then issued yet another, and stronger, order:

The Court, having considered of & given ansr to the petition of the inhabitants of Salisbury, calling to minde the affront that Joseph Peaslee put upon this Courts judgement & order in the yeare fifty eight, not only by continewing his preaching amongs the inhabitants of the new toune of Salisbury notwithstanding this courts injunction to the country but refusing to come to ansr for his

contempt of the courts order & understanding the County Court only fined him five shillings for his absence weekly, as they did others & that still he continews preaching there as frequently as before the courts order & that also as we have been informed against the advice of the church whereof he is a member, and that his preaching, (being very weak and unfit for so great a work) doth rather increase then lessen the contentions there, doe order, that the said Joseph Peaslee be forthwith by order of this court forbidden to preach anymore in any part of this jurisdiction till he give full satisfaction of this Court for what have been past.

This dispute had still not been resolved when Peaslee died on December 3, 1660.

*Old Quaker Burying Ground,  
Newton, New Hampshire  
(immediately north of  
Salisbury, Massachusetts) —  
possible burial site of  
Joseph Peaslee (c. 1600–1661).  
Cemetery does still have legible  
tombstones for several  
descendants of Joseph Peaslee.*





## BARTHOLOMEW HEATH AND FAMILY

John and Jane (Peaslee) Davis's daughter Mary married Josiah Heath. Josiah was the son of another couple who were among Haverhill's earliest residents — Bartholomew and Hannah (Moyce) Heath.

Bartholomew Heath had been born around 1615, possibly in the village of Nazeing, Essex County, England, about 20 miles north of London. He is believed to have come to America in the ship *Lyon* that sailed from London, England, on June 22, 1632, arriving in Boston, Massachusetts, on September 16, 1632. (Only a portion of the *Lyon's* manifest for its 1632 voyage has been found, giving the names for only about one-third of the passengers.

Bartholomew Heath's name does not appear on it, but it is believed that he was among the unnamed two-thirds of the voyagers.) He was only 17 years old at the time of the *Lyon's* voyage.

After arriving in Boston, Bartholomew initially settled in the Massachusetts community of Roxbury (now a neighborhood of Boston), before moving on to Newbury. About 1640, he married Hannah Moyce, whose family had come to Massachusetts from Dennington Parish, Suffolk County, England.

By 1642, Bartholomew and Hannah had settled in Haverhill. In 1650, he was one of 43 freemen living in Haverhill.

Bartholomew worked as an innkeeper.

Bartholomew Heath is mentioned several times in the early town records and history of Haverhill. Most indicate that he was a highly respected resident of the town (although at least one entry records a failure to live up to the strict standards expected of Puritans). For example:

- ♦ 1648 - January 22 — named a Selectman at a town meeting (but did not serve that year)
- ♦ 1650 - February 28 — selected Constable in Haverhill
- ♦ 1650 - December 9 — authorized at town meeting to build a barn on the Haverhill commons
- ♦ 1650 - December 20 — with three other Haverhill residents, was granted land west of Little River
- ♦ 1651/52 - February 23 — Haverhill's freemen approved the request of a James Pecker to live in their town, and stipulated that Bartholomew Heath would sell four acres of his land to Pecker for the price of eight pounds.
- ♦ 1652 - June 7 — granted an additional four acres in Haverhill's second division of plough land; drew lot #1 in the town's second division of meadow land

- ◆ 1657 - October 12 — served as town Selectman
- ◆ 1658 - December 3 — with two other freemen, empowered to set bounds for fences in Haverhill
- ◆ 1659 - received lot #40 in the town's third division of meadow land and lot #40 in its third division of plough land
- ◆ 1661 - received lot #9 in Haverhill's fourth division of meadow land
- ◆ 1664, 1665, 1668 - served on multiple grand and trial juries
- ◆ 1665 - April—sworn in as appraiser for Haverhill
- ◆ 1665 - November 4 — with Andrew Greal entered into an agreement with the town council to repair the existing mill in Haverhill and, if that mill proved insufficient to satisfy the town's needs for grains, to build a second mill; agreement also stipulated that no other man could set up a competing mill in Haverhill
- ◆ 1665, 1667 — chosen as a Selectman for Haverhill
- ◆ 1668 - March 12 — deeded land to his sons John, Joseph, and Josiah.
- ◆ 1668 - August — requested by the

town to examine the accounts of a group of men who had previously been appointed to complete the construction of a meeting house for Haverhill

- ◆ 1677 — presented for two acts of drunkenness

Only three of Bartholomew and Hannah Heath's children — sons John, Joseph, and Josiah (our ancestor) — lived to adult age and married. Joseph died shortly after he was married, leaving one child. As a result, only John and Josiah became Bartholomew's heirs after he died on January 14, 1681.

## TO LEARN MORE

Brown, Janice. "Peaslee Family Genealogy" (<http://www.nj.searchroots.com/EG/peaslee.htm>).

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Giorgi, Valerie Dyer. *Bartholomew Heath of Haverhill, Massachusetts*. 1994.