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NATHANIEL ELY c. 1607 - 1675  
SAMUEL ELY c. 1630 - 1691

Ely's Tavern, Springfield, Mass., 1665 - 1681

Nathaniel Ely was born in England about 1607 and came to New England probably in 1634. He died in Springfield, Mass., 25 March 1675. He married Martha ( - ) who died at Springfield 23 October 1683.

Nathaniel Ely and his family first settled at Cambridge, Mass., where he was made a Freeman of Massachusetts Bay Colony on 6 May 1635, the same day as his close friend, Robert Day, whose house adjoined the Ely's. Nathaniel, his wife Martha and their daughter Ruth and son Samuel in 1636 removed to Hartford, Conn. with the Rev. Thomas Hooker group, where Nathaniel Ely's and Robert Day's names are on the Founders' Monument.

Ely's home lot abutting on "the highway leading from Centinell Hill", bordered by that of Robert Day on the north, was one of the ten pieces of land in Hartford he owned there before he removed to Norwalk, Conn. where he became one of the Founders.

In both Hartford and Norwalk Ely held civil positions including Constable and Selectman, before moving to Springfield, Mass. about 1658. Here he settled, was "admitted as an inhabitant" on 26 March 1660 and built his permanent home that became the Ely Tavern in 1665. It stood on Main Street in Springfield for over 200 years. It was moved to the corner of Dwight and Sanford Street about 1845 where it was recognized as probably the oldest building in Springfield until it was torn down in June 1900.

Besides his tavernkeeping, Nathaniel held positions in Springfield as Constable, served 5 terms as a Selectman, was measurer of lands from 1665 to 1669 and sealer of weights and measures in 1674. He was one of two men appointed to lay a road to and over the Chiccuppee River in 1664 and served on the building committee for a new Meeting House in 1674.

In 1665 Ely was excused from military service a few years before he reached age 60, and was licensed to keep an ordinary. The record of the County Court held at Springfield 26 September 1665 sets forth his license thus:

Nathaniel Ely of Springfield, being desired and putt upon to keep an ordinary there, or House for Common Entertainement, was by this Corte lycensed to, that worke, as also for selling wines or strong liquors for ye year ensuing, Provided he keep good rule and order in his house. Also ye said Nathaniel Ely is upon his desire by this Corte released from Trayning in ye Towne soe long as he continues to keep ye Ordinary.

This license was renewed each year from 1665 until his death in 1675. There was an incident of his being fined once for selling cider to Indians and once for not keeping beer as strong as the law prescribed.

After the death of his father, Samuel Ely succeeded his father as tavernkeeper until 1681. Later the inn became a dwelling house and was used during the American Revolution as a site for many consultations between generals and minor officers of the Continental Army.

- Elizabeth Mack Munger  
# 78-40

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