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JOHN SEVERANCE, SR.

Tavernkeeper, Salisbury, Massachusetts, 1647-1665

John Severance, “Planter” and “Vintner,” possibly youngest son of John Severans of Broadway and Powick, Worcestershire, England by his wife, Mary Langley, was born in or near 1609 at Ipswich, England. He died at Salisbury, Massachusetts on April 9, 1682.* His first wife was Abigail Kimball, born about 1617, probably at Ipswich, England, daughter of Richard and Ursula (Scott) Kimball, who sailed to America in 1634.† She died June 17, 1658 at Salisbury, MA.‡ He married second Susanna, widow of Henry Ambrose, on October 2, 1663.§

John Severance became a freeman while residing in Boston in 1637, and in 1640 he enrolled in the Military Company of Massachusetts, organized in 1638 and now known as *The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts*. A number of passages from various writings serve to establish his residence and his service to his community as a taverner:

“The plantation at Merrimack was begun early in 1638, but the grant was not obtained from the General Court until later that year. The petition for this grant was made by twelve men, only two of who ever lived there...” A meeting was called September 4, 1639 for locating the town. The General Court gave the plantation, first known as Merrimack, the name of Colchester, and on October 7, 1640, the same Court changed its name to Salisbury. After the location was decided upon, roads were laid out and house lots located as designed and shown by an accompanying map with the record of 37 names. In this list of the 3rd month [May] 1639, the name of John Severans appears for the first time in Salisbury. On the 29th [day], 10th mo 1639 “ther was granted unto John Severans one acre more or less for a house Lott ... Also ther was granted him two acres more or less for his meddow Lott ... Also ther was granted unto him fower Acres more or less for a planting Lott ...” More land was granted to him in 1640 and it seems to be fully settled that he built his home in Salisbury early in 1640 when he moved his family from Boston. “From what is known of him and his wife it is safe to say that they were among the number included in the list of membership constituting the first organization of the Congregational Church in Salisbury.”

* *Vital Records of Salisbury, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1649* (Topsfield, MA: Topsfield Hist. Soc., 1915), p. 615.

† Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1634-1635* (6 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 2005), vol. 4, pp. 154-160.

‡ David Webster Hoyt, *The Old Families of Salisbury and Amesbury, Massachusetts...* (Providence, RI: 1897), p. 314; and see *Vital Records of Salisbury, Massachusetts...*, *supra*, p. 615.

§ Clarence Almon Torrey, *New England Marriages Prior to 1700* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1985), p. 661; and see *Vital Records of Salisbury, Massachusetts ...*, *supra*, p. 477.

“From these few brief records it will be seen that he was, very soon after the settlement of the plantation at Salisbury, appointed Prudential man, whose office answered to that of Selectman and Supervisor.”

“22 [day] 6th mo 1642. John Severans with six others was appointed Prudential man to manage the affaires of ye plantation,” and he continued in the office for two years. He issued an order as “Prudential man” in 1643 that “the military office in every Towne shall appoint what arms to be brought to the meeting houses on the Lord’s day.”

“He was often put in charge of public trusts of various kinds.” On January 6, 1645, he was appointed to lay out a road, and on May 27 following, he was appointed surveyor.

John Severance opened his Ordinary for the accommodation of the General Court on December 21, 1647, “agreeable to the appointment thereto by the said Court, and was afterwards known as a ‘victualyer and vintner,’ licensed to keep the ‘ordinary’ on October 7, 1640 at Salisbury in 1662, ‘3, ‘5 and later.”

John Severance and his first wife parented eleven children, all recorded at Salisbury.*

Samuel b. 19 Sep 1637; d. soon.

Ebenezer b. 7 Mar 1639 [40]; d. 1667, unmarr.

Abigail b. 7 Jan 1641/2; d. 7 Mar 1641/2 at Salisbury, MA.

Abigail (again) b. 25 May 1643; m. 29 Nov 1664 at Salisbury, MA to John Church; known ch., 1 son, Jonathan.

Mary b. 5 Aug 1645; m. 3 Dec 1663 at Salisbury, MA to James Coffin; she was liv. 1682; known ch., 1 dau., Mary.

John b. 24 Nov 1647; m. 15 Aug 1672 to Mary ____; 6 ch.

Joseph b. 14 Feb 1649/50; liv. 1665, poss. he is the person of that name who resided at Yarmouth, MA in 1682.

Elizabeth b. 8 Apr 1652; d. 23 Jun 1658 at Salisbury, MA.

Benjamin b. Jan 1654; liv. 1665.

Ephraim b. 8 Apr 1656; m. 9 Nov 1682 at Salisbury, MA to Lydia Morrill; 9 ch.

Elizabeth (again) b. 17 Jun 1658; d. 5 Feb 1662/3 at Salisbury, MA.

Additional Bibliography

Rev. John Severance, *The Severans Genealogical History* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons, 1893), pp. v, xi-xvii, 1.

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* Hoyt, *supra*, at pp. 314-5; and see *Vital Records of Salisbury, Massachusetts ...*, *supra*, pp. 216, 477 and 615.