

The Gerrish Family (Part I) by Edward Gerrish Mair

The Gerrish family is an interesting family to study. Rev. Joseph Gerrish was marginally involved in the Salem witch trials in 1692. Thomas Gerrish was at the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Edward Gerrish was an instigator of the Boston Massacre of 1775. The names of Colonel Jacob Gerrish and Colonel Samuel Gerrish are referenced in many Revolutionary War lineages. One of these Colonels was court martialed for passing out in a haystack during the Battle of Bunker Hill, but was later pardoned by General Washington.

The Gerrish family in the United States begins with Captain William Gerrish (1617-1687) who emigrated from Bristol, England with his employer Percival Lowell (1571-1665) in 1638. William Gerrish was the first commander of the Newbury militia and Newbury's first constable. William came to Newbury from Ipswich (Agawam) in 1639. William Gerrish and his offspring married into many of the other first settler families. William's sister, Elizabeth Gerrish (circa 1614/1615 - 1688) married Walter Price of Salem, to whom we will return shortly. My direct line begins with William (1), Moses (2), and Joseph (3).

First Generation

William Gerrish (1617-1687) appears frequently in early Newbury records. He married as his first wife, yjr boss's daughter, Joanna Lowell (1619-1677), the widow of John Oliver. Joanna Lowell and John Oliver had a daughter named Mary who married Samuel Appleton the son of the founder of Appleton Farm in Ipswich. William Gerrish's step daughter, Mary Oliver, is mentioned in William's will. Percival Lowell was the ancestor of all the later prominent Lowells including the Reverend John Lowell of Newburyport and his son Judge John Lowell of Boston. William's second wife was Ann Pierce, widow of John Manning, who was the owner of Long Wharf. William Gerrish and Ann Manning had one son named Henry.

William Gerrish died at his son Benjamin's home at the corner of Essex and Forrester Streets in Salem and was buried in the tomb of Captain Walter Price, his brother-in-law who was married to Elizabeth Gerrish.

I had been looking for this tomb for many years and thought I had found it in the Broad Street Cemetery where there is a tomb with a 19th century plaque on it that says "Anna

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Gerrish restored this tomb of her ancestors". However, I was recently (2012) at the Hamilton Room in the Newburyport, Massachusetts library where I confirmed that William Gerrish is buried in Walter Price's tomb. However, that tomb is not in the Broad Street Cemetery but is rather "the oldest tomb" in the Charter Street Burial Ground in Salem. The reason that I didn't find it before is that the inscription currently on the tomb says only "Built 1650 Repaired 1809 Walter Price Bartlett Died May 7, 1824 Age 81 years." Walter Price Bartlett is the great great grandson of Walter Price and now rests in the same tomb as Walter Price and William Gerrish.

Second Generation

Dover, NH - John Gerrish (1646-1714) was the eldest son of William and Joanna. He moved to New Hampshire and married a daughter of Richard Waldron, a NH Supreme Court judge. Some of John's descendants moved to Boston. Other children moved to Maine, including Timothy for whom Gerrish Island in Kittery is named. Two short genealogies of this line were published in the early 20th century. One of John's daughters, Sarah, was taken captive by French & Indians and sold in Canada.

Wenham, MA - Rev. Joseph Gerrish (1650-1720) also married a daughter of Richard Waldron. He graduated from Harvard in 1669 and was minister of Wenham for several years. Joseph's son Samuel (1691 - 1740) married a daughter of Judge Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) named Mary. An interesting coincidence springs from the early days of the town of Wenham. Rev. John Fisk (1601-1677) was the first minister of Wenham although he later moved to and was a founder of Chelmsford, MA. 250 years later descendants of these two Wenham families - Bertha Fisk (1874-1958) and Samuel Wood (Gerrish) Thurber (1867-1926) would meet in Paris, France and marry in New York City and become the parents of my grandmother Evelyn Thurber Mair.

Salem, MA - Benjamin Gerrish (1652-1713) married Hannah Ruck. He was the collector of his majesty's customs in Salem. Benjamin lived in the part of Salem known as Winter Island, married several times, and was quite wealthy. William Gerrish (1) was visiting Benjamin when he died. Benjamin and several of his family members' portraits are in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum.

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Newbury, MA - Moses Gerrish (1656-1694) married Jane Sewall (1659-1717) who was the daughter of Henry Sewall (1614-1700) and Jane Dummer (1628-1701). Jane Dummer was the daughter of Stephen Dummer and Alice Archer. Stephen Dummer (1597-?) was a brother of Richard Dummer who owned most of the land on the south bank of the Parker River. Henry Sewall was the father of Judge Samuel Sewall. Henry Sewall owned most of the north bank of the Parker River. Henry Sewall divided his land three ways between his sons in law. These three men were William Moody (husband of daughter Mehitable), Moses Gerrish (husband of daughter Jane), and William Longfellow (husband of daughter Anne).

Boston, MA - William Gerrish II (1648-1683) was a medical doctor in Charlestown.

As is often the case in genealogy, there is much less information about the daughters of William Gerrish and Joanna Lowell. They were:

Abigail Gerrish (1647 - died young)

Elizabeth Gerrish (1654 - 1712) married Stephen Greenleaf

Mary Gerrish (1658 - 1694) married John Dole

Anna Gerrish (1660 - ?)

Judith Gerrish (1662 - died young)

Most source material on the early Gerrish family seem to tell the same stories as if all were copied from earlier works. The most detailed and useful publication is a combined work in two parts called Book I The Descendants of Captain William Gerrish and Joanna Lowell and Book II The Descendants of Captain Walter Price and Elizabeth Gerrish, Compiled by Douglass G. Adams, Robert T. Adams, and Sara L. Adams and published In Baltimore, MD in 2008 by Gateway Press, Inc.

I originally found the information about the Walter Price Bartlett Tomb in the previously cited work and with the help of Cecile Pimental confirmed it in Charter Street Cemetery Burial Records, Salem, Massachusetts compiled by William Carlson and published by the Higginson Book Company in 2012.