

## The Howes, Lothrop, and Linnells of Kent and London, England, and Scituate and Barnstable, Massachusetts

By Dan R. McConnell

*Published by the Cape Cod Genealogical Society Bulletin, Fall 2007*

The family of Reverend John Howes [also House, Howse], whose children, kin, and friends, were brought before the Royal Court of the High Commission in London, England in the 1630's, were persecuted and imprisoned for their religious beliefs. These beliefs also had political effects, which we will explain. Some fled to America, first to Scituate, then Barnstable, both of which were in Plymouth Colony in that time, a place friendly to their Separatist beliefs. Others remained in England and played a key role in the emergence of non-conformist churches, the disputes in Parliament, and the English Civil War.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, for ordinary people, a lengthy confinement in London prisons such as Newgate, Clink, Fleet or Bridewell was tantamount to a death sentence due to crowded, filthy, disease-ridden conditions. Such dangerous confinement, for religious non-conformity, under the arbitrary rules of the High Commission, became a driving force for like minded people to flee to America. English resentment to the many breaches of Common Law led to the rise of Parliament in opposition, and ultimately to the abolishment of the High Commission in 1641 and the Civil war in the 1640's. After the "Glorious Revolution" in 1688, the English Bill of Rights was enacted to specifically forbid such practices, echoed famously in our own Bill of Rights, the First Ten Amendments to the U.S Constitution.

For the Howes family and their kin, the road to prison and to America began in Kent. The Reverend John Howes matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge in 1590. He is listed in the Alumni Cantabrigienes as such with the further note that he was rector at Eastwell, Kent in 1610. In the Bishop's Transcripts for Canterbury he is also given as Curate for Egerton, 1592-6. From his location at the time of the baptism of his children, he is likely to have also been Curate for Eastwell from 1603 to his death in 1630. He performed the marriage ceremony for his daughter Hannah, in her marriage to Rev. John Lothrop [also Lothrop] in Eastwell, 16 October, 1610. In his will, dated 1630, he is described as Minister, Eastwell. In his will, his wife's name is given as Alice.

Children of the Reverend John Howes:

Elizabeth Howes, Bapt, unkn. Married, Eastwell to John Champion, of Little Chart, 28 September 1607

Hannah Howes, Bapt. Egerton, 5 May, 1595. Died between 1632 and 1634, London, while her husband, Rev Lothrop, was in prison. Married, Eastwell to Rev. John Lothrop, 16 October 1610.

Peninah Howes, Bapt, Egerton, 11 April, 1596. Died after 1669, Barnstable, Massachusetts. Married between 1632 and 1638 to Robert Linnell, probably in London. [The will of her brother Thomas Howes, in 1643 gives her name as Peninah Linnell [also Lynell]. In the High Commission proceedings in 1632, she is given as Peninah Howes].

Druscilla Howes. Bapt., unkn. Married, Eastwell, to Simon Player 17 April 1637

John Howes. Bapt. Eastwell 19 June, 1603. Married Eastwell to Mary Osborn of Ashford, 18 September, 1623.

Priscilla Howes. Bapt Eastwell 25 August, 1605. Buried, Eastwell 28 Nov 1618

Thomas Howes. Bapt. Eastwell, 21 August, 1608. Died 1644 London. In his will, dated 18 October 1643, he lists his wife Elizabeth, his brother Samuel [of Scituate and Barnstable, Mass. See Great Migration Series, Vol. III, 1634–5, page 424–8], his sister Peninah Lynell, his sister Druscilla Player. He also lists as administrators, the famous Puritan Praise God Barbon [Speaker of Parliament during the Commonwealth period, known as “Barebones Parliamant”, and William Granger, who was brought up before the High Commission along with Barbon’s wife Sara. All were members of Rev. Lothrop’s congregation in London]

Samuel Howes. Bapt Eastwell, 10 June, 1610. Died 12 September 1667, Mass. Married about April 1636 to Ann Hammond of Watertown, Mass. He emigrated to America in 1634, joined Rev Lothrop’s church in Scituate then Barnstable, and returned to Scituate. See reference above]

Henry Howes. Bapt. Eastwell, 28 June, 1612.

Note. There has been great confusion in the American record to the effect that Robert Linnell’s first wife was a Jemimah Howes, presumably another daughter to Rev. John Howes. This has been compounded by an LDS record of the supposed marriage of a Jemimah Howes to Robert Linnell in 1621 in Ashford, Kent. There are no records to support this.

John Lothrop, son of Thomas Lothrop, bapt, Etton, Yorkshire, 20 Dec, 1584, first entered Oxford, then withdrew and matriculated at Queen’s College, Cambridge, graduating with a B.A 1606, M.A. 1609. He was curate at Little Chart 1609, Egerton 1610, serving until his resignation between 1621 and 1624. In 1625, he succeeded Henry Jacob as Minister to the first Independent Church in London, founded in 1616, and one of the five oldest independent [non-conformist] churches in England. The principles or covenant of the Jacob/Lothrop church were essentially Separatist and were very close to those of the Rev. John Robinson in Leiden [Pilgrims]. During a period of exile before 1616, Henry Jacob resided with the Robinson congregation in Leiden. These churches were illegal, as the Church of England, under the King and his appointed Archbishop of Canterbury was the only legal church. The Jacob/Lothrop church met in private, in the homes of congregants. These secret meetings for the purpose of praying preaching and interpreting the Bible, were called conventicles.

In 1632, Rev. Lothrop was arrested in the house of one of his congregants along with 42 of his congregation, and was brought before the Court of the High Commission. He, and they, were charged with sedition and holding conventicles. The political nature of the charge of sedition [“an insurrection against established authority”], and the antique language of “conventicle” [ a private meeting to hear illegal preaching] renders the charges unclear to modern ears. The charges were, however, deadly serious and the court proceedings unimaginable. The accused had none of the rights of modern citizens. The court was an inquisition, where the accused were forced to testify against themselves, with our counsel. The process was so intimidating that many

people were driven to flee. It was one of the driving forces in the Great Migration to New England. It was no dispute over prayer books and vestments. It was about life, death, and salvation.

First, what was the Court of the High Commission? It, along with the Court of the Star Chamber, was a Royal Prerogative Court [King's Rights], originally created in the time of Henry VII [1485–1509]. These courts were separate from the Civil Courts, or Common Law Courts, which operated on the basis of precedent, and the rights of English people under the Common Law. Originally, these courts were established under the King's right to protect individuals from abuse in Common Law Courts. Under the Elizabeth I and the Stuart Kings [James I and Charles I], these courts were used by the Church of England to suppress those who sought to reform the church, or to seek a different path to salvation, using court rules that were in clear violation with the Common Law. They came down, with extreme severity, on Separatists in particular. Because of their covenant relationship, Separatists believed that every congregation could be a church unto itself, and could elect its own Ministers, by vote of its elders, based upon the model of the early Christian church [pre-Constantine]. To do so meant they had no need of the Church of England, and did not accept the authority of the Bishops. This was unacceptable to the Crown. As famously said by King James I, "No Bishop, no King". Since the King was the head of the Church of England, and appointed the Archbishop, he wanted one church with order and conformity. To the King, the Separatists position implied anarchy and chaos, and must be stopped. As James I said further, "I will harry them out of the land".

Under Charles I and his Archbishop, William Laud, the screws were tightened much more. Laud was the Chief Judge of the High Commission. In his zeal to suppress nonconformists, he scrapped several principles of English Common Law, including [1] protection against self-incrimination, [2] the right to confront one's accusers, [3] the right to produce witnesses in one's own defense, [4] the right to a prompt hearing in court, so one did not languish in a dangerous jail without a trial, and [5] cruel and unusual punishments. All of these rights were suspended for those, such as the members of Rev. Lothrop's congregation, who were brought before the Court of the High Commission in May 1632.

The Ministers and their flock faced brutal treatment. For the high crime of publishing tracts critical of the Bishops many ministers had their ears cut off, their faces branded and were confined to prison for life, which meant death within a few months or a few years at most. When one was brought before the court, the requirement was to sign an oath of Allegiance to the Church of England, to forswear any contrary belief or practice and to answer any question posed by the judges, consisting of Laud and five other Bishops. To do so meant to abandon their right to choose their own Minister, to hear preaching and to attend Bible study with a Minister of their choice. They believed their own souls to be at stake. They were not allowed any of the basics of a fair trial, and certainly faced cruel punishment. So what did they do? They refused to swear the oath and were jailed. Some died in prison, some were released and fled to America, and some fought for Parliament in the English Civil War.

Now, hear the voices of Archbishop Laud, of Rev. John Lothrop and of the Howes and their friends [from the Proceedings of the Court of the High Commission]:

"5 May, 1632. This day were brought to the court out of prison diverse persons which were taken on Sunday last at a conventicle met at the House of Barnet, a brewer's clerk, dwelling in the precinct of Black Friars: By name, John Lothrop, their Minister, Humphrey Barnard, Henry Dod, Samuel Eaton, William Granger, Sara Jones, Sara Jacob, Peninah Howes, Sara Barbon, Susan Wilson and diverse others"---

Statement by the Archbishop—" You show your selves to be unthankful to God, to the King and to the Church of England, that when, God be praised, through his Majesties care and ours that you have preaching in every church, and men have liberty to join in prayer and participation in the sacraments and have catechizing to enlighten you, you in an unthankful manner cast off all this yoke, and in private unlawfully assemble yourselves together making rents and divisions in the church.---You are unlearned men that seek to make up a religion of your own heads!"---"you are desperately heretical"

"Then came in Mr. Lothrop, who is asked by what authority he had to preach and keep this conventicle." Laud,--"How many women sat cross legged upon the bed, while you sat on one side and preached and prayed most devoutly?" Lothrop. "I keep no such evil company" "Will you lay your hand upon the book and take your oath?" Lothrop. "I refuse the oath."

Peninah Howes " I dare not swear this oath till I am better informed of it, for which I desire time";;"I will give an answer of my faith, if I be demanded, but not willingly forswear myself"

Sara Barbon " I dare not swear, I do not understand it. I will tell the truth without swearing"

Then they were then all taken to the New Prison.

"8 May, 1632. Laud to Sara Jones—" This you are commanded to do of God who says you must obey your superiors." Sara Jones "That which is of God is according to God's Word and the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain"

'Lothrop. I do not know that that I have done anything which might cause me justly to be brought before the judgement seat of man, and for this oath, I do not know the nature of it" Laud "You are accused of Schism"

To Samuel Howes 'Will you take your oath?' Howes I am a young man and do not know what this oath is"

Peninah Howes is then asked to take the oath, but she refused. Laud "Will you trust Mr Lothrop and believe him rather than the Church of England?' P