

# THE ENGLISH ORIGIN AND PARENTAGE OF WILLIAM<sup>1</sup> AND MAGDALEN (CRANE) SMITH OF MASSACHUSETTS AND NEW YORK

By Eugene Cole Zubrinsky, FASG

The sixth volume of Robert Charles Anderson's *Great Migration* second series, 1634–35, contains a sketch of William<sup>1</sup> Smith of Weymouth and Rehoboth, Massachusetts, and Huntington and Jamaica, Long Island, in which the author describes Smith's origin as unknown and his wife as Magdalen —.<sup>1</sup> While that account has heretofore represented the most current and authoritative scholarship pertaining to this man and his family, recent findings augment knowledge of them.

On 2 September 1635, Will[ia]m Smyth was one of six Weymouth men admitted freemen of Massachusetts Bay Colony.<sup>2</sup> Of the four with previously known origins, three had come with their families from county Somerset in southwestern England (Richard Adams, Joseph Hull, and William Read), as had three other Weymouth settler families of 1635 (those headed by Musachiell Bernard, Thomas Holbrook, and John Whitmarsh), among the few whose pre-immigration homes have been identified.<sup>3</sup> That the search for William and Magdalen Smith should therefore begin with Somerset seemed reasonable—and was almost immediately fruitful: “Will[ia]m Smith *al[ia]s* Hillard of Weston Bamfield and Magdalen Crane of Southcadburye were married” in the latter place 14 September 1624, the bridegroom having the previous day obtained their license; the marriage allegation bond (in effect, a license application) describes him as a clothworker.<sup>4</sup> South Cad-

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Charles Anderson, George F. Sanborn, and Melinde Lutz Sanborn, *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England, 1634–1635*, 7 vols. (Boston, 1999–2011), 6:408–12, at 408, 410.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson et al., *Great Migration, 1634–35* [note 1], 1:8, 3:454, 4:352, 6:25, 408, 7:150; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 vols. in 6 (Boston, 1853–54), 1:371.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson et al., *Great Migration, 1634–35* [note 1], 1:8, 261, 3:350, 452, 6:24, 7:363.

<sup>4</sup> South Cadbury, Somerset, parish register, 1(1559–1729):22 [images and index, “Somerset, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, 1531–1812,” ancestry.com]. The marriage license allegation, from an unidentified set of such documents probably from the Deanery of Yeovil, Archdeaconry of Wells, now at Somerset Archives, is available in a subset “Various (Marriage Licenses)” indexed in the same database at ancestry.com. Named in the allegation bond and signing as witnesses/bondsmen were Reynold Smith *alias* Hillard of Weston Bampfylde, yeoman, and [Magdalen's brother] Francis Crane of South

bury and adjacent Weston Bampfylde were small Somerset church parishes (the latter is now a village in the civil parish of Sparkford). Magdalen was baptized in South Cadbury on 1 January 1603[/4], daughter of Thomas Crane, rector of the parish church there, and his probable wife, Elizabeth (Barton) (on whom see below).<sup>5</sup>

Colonial records have enabled the identification of nine children of William and Magdalen Smith; the first three were Thomas, Benjamin, and Hannah.<sup>6</sup> The South Cadbury parish register shows Thomas's baptismal date as 14 May 1626, Benjamin's as 24 February 1629[/30], and Hannah's as 6 April 1632.<sup>7</sup> Also recorded at South Cadbury is the baptism on 2 April 1634 of an additional child, William,<sup>8</sup> of whom no further record has been found.

As noted above, William<sup>1</sup> Smith *alias* Hillard was of Weston Bampfylde when he married Magdalen Crane in the nearby South Cadbury church, where her father (by then long dead) had been pastor and all four English-born Smith children were baptized. But in view of the close proximity of South Cadbury and its church to Weston Bampfylde, it is not unreasonable to suppose that William and his family resided in the latter place until emigrating, probably in 1635. Also of Weston Bampfylde was Joane Hillard *alias* Smith, who married at the Church of the Holy Cross there, on 4 August 1623, Abraham Cave of Milborne Port.<sup>9</sup> Ten miles north of Weston Bampfylde is the parish of Ditcheat, the register of whose Church of St. Mary Magdalene contains records potentially relevant to the origin of William<sup>1</sup> Smith/Hillard and Joane Hillard/Smith (key entries are italicized):<sup>10</sup>

Cadbury, tailor. Reynold Smith/Hillard was, as will be seen, Magdalen's brother-in-law and also almost certainly William's brother, but no baptismal or other record has been found to confirm the latter.

<sup>5</sup> South Cadbury parish register [note 4], 1:16; Bruton, Somerset, parish register, 1(1554-1649), unpaginated [images, "Somerset Baptisms, . . ." note 4, image 7] (Crane-Barton).

<sup>6</sup> Donald Lines Jacobus, "William Smith of Jamaica," TAG 25(1949):70-75, 144; Anderson et al., *Great Migration, 1634-35* [note 1], 6:409-12.

<sup>7</sup> South Cadbury parish register [note 4], 1:23-24 (surname *Smith*; no alias).

<sup>8</sup> South Cadbury parish register [note 4], 1:26 (surname *Smith*; no alias).

<sup>9</sup> Weston Bampfylde, Somerset, bishop's transcripts [FHL film #1526112, item 1]. This fragmentary collection also contains records of persons presumably related to the dual-named William or Joane or both but for whom no other records have been discovered: Ann Hillarde *alias* Smith, bur. 28 Dec. 1637; Reginald Smith *alias* Hillard and Anne Higgins, both of Weston Bampfylde, m. 31 Jan. 1639[/40]; Mary Hillard *alias* Smith, dau. of Reginald Hillard *alias* Smith and his wife Margaret, bur. 30 July 1640; Reginald Hillard *alias* Smith, bur. 31 Nov. 1640; Anne Hillard *alias* Smith, dau. of Margaret Hillard *alias* Smith, widow, bur. 20 March 1640[/1].

<sup>10</sup> Ditcheat, Somerset, parish register, 1(1562-1653), unpaginated [images, "Somerset Baptisms, . . ." note 4, images 3-4, 6-11, 20-23, 25, 28-32].

Baptisms:<sup>11</sup>

Joane, daughter of Thomas Hillarde, 12 Nov. 1581  
 Ann, daughter of Abraham Hillarde, 25 April 1595  
*Joane, daughter of Joane Smith, 22 May 1596*  
*William, son of John Smith alias Allum, 24 Aug. 1598*  
 Ellis, son of John Smith *alias* Allum, 10 Aug. 1600  
 Margery, daughter of John Smith *alias* Allam, 5 May 1602  
 Thomas, son of William Hillard, 26 March 1607  
 Andrew, son of Abraham Hillard, 3 Dec. 1613  
 John, son of William Hillard, 20 Nov. 1615

## Burials:

William Allam, 30 Sept. 1570  
 Mary Hyllard, widow, 23 Aug. 1586  
 Ann, wife of Thomas Hyllard, 29 Sept. 1594  
 Richard Hyllard, 9 July 1595  
 Elnor Hyllard, widow, 4 May 1598  
*Agnis [pronounced Annis; variant of Anne], wife of John Smith alias Allam, 7 Aug. 1602*  
 Ellis, son of John Smith *alias* Allam, 13 May 1603  
*John Smith alias Allam, 7 Sept. 1604*  
 Thomas Hillard, 11 June 1605  
 Mabill, daughter of Thomas Hillard, 13 June 1605  
 Abraha[m] Hillard, 13 June 1627

## Marriages:

John Hillarde and Joane Clifforde, 15 March 1565[/6]  
 John Derome and Agnis Hillarde, 29 May 1575  
*John Smithe and Anne Hurde, 26 Jan. 1595[/6]*  
 Robert Coale and Margaret Hillarde, 1 Feb. 1600[/1]  
 William Higgins and Marye Hillarde, 12 Nov. 1601  
*John Smith alias Allam and Agnes Edwards, widow, 13 Feb. 1602[/3]*  
 William Hillard and Elizabeth Martin, 5 Aug. 1605  
 Humfery Bull and Dorothy Hillard, 30 June 1608  
 Thomas Tucker and Dorothee Hillard, 28 Nov. 1619

Altogether, the proximity of Weston Bampfylde and Ditcheat, persons' matching names, compatible dates, and the premature deaths of Anne/Agnes Smith/Allam (1602) and her husband, John (1604), raise the strong possibility that William Smith/Hillard of Weston Bampfylde—indisputably identical with William<sup>1</sup> Smith of Massachusetts and New York—was also the person of that name baptized in Ditcheat 24 August 1598, son of John Smith *alias* Allam and his wife Anne/Agnis (Hurde). Because this William's parents had both died by the time he was six, a plausible explanation of his

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<sup>11</sup> Other children of Thomas Hillard were baptized in Ditcheat between 1573 and 1578. Additional children of Abraham Hillard and of William Hillard were baptized there between 1597[/8] and 1611[/2].

alias is that a Hillard family of Ditcheat raised him from an early age; this would also explain the alias of his probable brother, Reynold (see note 4).<sup>12</sup>

### CRANE FAMILY

THOMAS CRANE, M.A., was the Puritan rector of the Church of Saint Thomas à Becket, South Cadbury, Somerset, from 2 December 1587 until soon before his burial there, on 2 June 1608.<sup>13</sup> The Puritan activist Sir Francis Hastings, whose mansion, North Cadbury Court, was (is) nearby, had brought Crane to South Cadbury.<sup>14</sup> Almost certainly the same Thomas Crane was a seventeen-year-old native of London and one of forty resident Queen's Scholars at Westminster School (attended by sons of local gentry), when in 1576 he was elected to Christ Church, a college of the University of Oxford, where he was admitted in mid-1577, received a B.A. in 1579/80, and an M.A. in 1582/3; he was "incorporated" at Cambridge in 1584.<sup>15</sup>

Less than two months after becoming rector at South Cadbury, "Mr." Thomas Crane married eight miles northeast in the parish of Bruton, 21 January 1587[/8], ELIZABETH BARTON.<sup>16</sup> The "widdowe of Thomas Crane Rect." was buried in South Cadbury 10 March 1629[/30];<sup>17</sup> the record, however, identifies her not as Elizabeth but as Katherine Crane. There are sev-

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<sup>12</sup> One might similarly surmise that Joane Hillard/Smith (William's cousin?), of Weston Bampfylde when she married Abraham Cave, was the Joane Smith whose record of baptism—in Ditcheat 22 May 1596, daughter of Joane Smith—implies that she was born out of wedlock. Perhaps the inability or unwillingness of her mother to keep her caused the girl to be taken into the same Hillard household that had received William or a closely related one, probably in infancy, later disposing her and others to give precedence to her foster family's surname. A second possibility, not incompatible with the first, is that her biological father's surname was *Hillard*.

<sup>13</sup> James Arthur Bennett, *Report on the Manuscripts of Wells Cathedral* (London, 1885), 267; Claire C. Cross, *The Puritan Earl: The Life of Henry Hastings, Third Earl of Huntingdon, 1536–1595* (New York, 1966), 42–43; South Cadbury parish register [note 4], 1:13–18. Inquiries to the Somerset Record Office and the Society of Genealogists Library (London) and a search of Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills produced no records of Rev. Thomas Crane.

<sup>14</sup> Cross, *Puritan Earl* [note 13], 42–43; Richard L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, 1981), 57; northcadburycourt.com/the-house/history-of-the-house.

<sup>15</sup> George Fisher Russell Barker and Alan Herbert Stenning, eds., *The Record of Old Westminster: A Biographical List of All Those Known to Have Been Educated at Westminster School from the Earliest Times to 1927*, 2 vols. (London, 1928), 1:v, 229; Joseph Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500–1714*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1891–92), 1:345; John Venn and John Archibald Venn, eds., *Alumni Cantabrigienses . . . Part I (From the Earliest Times to 1751)*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1922–27), 1:413 ("[d]ied 1608").

<sup>16</sup> Bruton parish register [note 5].

<sup>17</sup> South Cadbury parish register [note 4], 1:25.

eral reasons to suppose that this is a clerical error: The interval between the Bruton marriage and the baptism of Rev. Crane's first child is a day short of the average forty weeks of human gestation. No relevant marriage record of a Thomas Crane and anyone named Katherine has been found for this period.<sup>18</sup> If Rev. Crane were to have married a second time, he likely would have recorded it in the South Cadbury church register he maintained. And of Thomas Crane's five daughters, there is an *Elizabeth* but no *Katherine*. The absence of a burial record for Elizabeth Crane—the pastor almost certainly would have recorded such an event—lends itself to three logical possibilities: (1) Katherine (—) was Thomas Crane's only wife; (2) Rev. Crane married first Elizabeth Barton (of whom there is no further record) and second Katherine; and (3) the burial record naming Rev. Crane's widow as Katherine is actually that of Elizabeth (Barton), his only wife. The available evidence favors the last of these.

Children of Rev. Thomas<sup>A</sup> and, probably, Elizabeth (Barton) Crane, bp., m., or bur. South Cadbury unless stated otherwise:<sup>19</sup>

- i THOMAS CRANE, bp. 27 Oct. 1588. A Thomas Crane/Craigne of Somerset, son of a clergyman, was recorded as age 19 when on 12 Oct. 1610 he matriculated at New College, University of Oxford, where he received a B.A. in 1614, M.A. in 1617/8, and B.D. in 1628; he was a canon of Wells Cathedral in 1620.<sup>20</sup>
- ii FRANCIS CRANE, bp. 16 Aug. 1590, bur. [11?] Jan. 1592[/3]. He was probably named in honor of his father's patron, Sir Francis Hastings.
- iii ANNA CRANE, bp. 12 Aug. 1593.
- iv MARIA CRANE, bp. 30 Nov. 1595.
- v MARGARET CRANE, bp. 14 Aug. 1597; m. 15 June 1618, REYNOLD SMITH *alias* HILLARD.
- vi JOHN CRANE, bp. 11 Feb. 1598[/9].
- vii ELIZABETH CRANE, bp. 16 March 1599[/1600].
- viii FRANCIS CRANE (again), tailor, bp. 9 Aug. 1601; m. 9 Aug. 1623, REBECCA LONGEMAN.
- ix WILLIAM CRANE, bp. 19 Sept. 1602.
- x MAGDALEN<sup>1</sup> CRANE, bp. 1 Jan. 1603[/4], d. before 30 Sept. 1684, prob. Norwalk, Conn.;<sup>21</sup> m. (1) South Cadbury, 14 Sept. 1624, WILLIAM<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup> A Thomas Crane m. St. James Clerkenwell, Islington, London, 27 Jan. 1593[/4], Katherine Pearsie, but Mathew, son of Thomas Crane, was bp. there, 14 Jan. 1598[/9] (St. James Clerkenwell, London, parish registers, marriages, 1:12v, baptisms, 1:24v [images, ancestry.com]).

<sup>19</sup> South Cadbury parish register [note 4], 1:13–17, 21–22.

<sup>20</sup> Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses* [note 15], 345 (Craine, “cler. fil.”); Mordechai Feingold, *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship: Science, Universities and Society in England, 1560–1640* (Cambridge, 1984), 150 (Crane).

<sup>21</sup> Jacobus, “William Smith of Jamaica” [note 6], 70.

SMITH *alias* HILLARD; m. (2) Jamaica, N.Y., by 1670, RICHARD OLMSTEAD.<sup>22</sup>

xi BENJAMIN CRANE, bp. 30 Dec. 1604, bur. 6 March 1605[/6].

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<sup>22</sup> Anderson, et al., *Great Migration, 1634-35* [note 1], 6:410, citing Jamaica, N.Y., Town Records, 1:306.

## A MOST EXECRABLE SPECIMEN OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PENMANSHIP

*Contributed by Patricia Law Hatcher, FASG, FGSP*

Rev. C. H. Evelyn White, F.S.A., transcribed the early church records of St. Margaret's Church, Ipswich, Suffolk, during his tenure there, 1880-1887, adding his editorial comments:<sup>1</sup>

A third handwriting begins here [at the beginning of page vi], the same is continued up to page x. A worse specimen of penmanship it is impossible to conceive, the entries tho' regularly made are most irregularly written. Some of these words must remain unknown, it must not be left to conjecture.

On the transcript of page vii he added, still annoyed:

At top of next page—viii—the writing is again obliterated[.] [T]he above and much that follow is a most execrable specimen of 16th Century penmanship.

Many of us can empathize with White's frustration.

*Dallas, Texas.*

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<sup>1</sup> C. H. Evelyn White, "Parish Register Transcripts, 1537-1563, St. Margaret's Church, Ipswich, Suffolk" [Family History Library, Salt Lake City, film #991944]. The original book was repaired in 1844. Charles Harold Evelyn White transcribed a number of East Anglian records.