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Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633, Volumes I-III

Introduction

For the user of this set of volumes to understand what is being presented, we must define carefully the scope of the Great Migration Study Project. Who were the participants in the Great Migration? What information is being collected on these people?

Criteria for Inclusion in The Great Migration Begins

The first phase of the Great Migration Study Project attempts to identify and describe all those Europeans who settled in New England prior to the end of 1633. The date was chosen because of the steep increase in migration beginning in 1634 and continuing for the rest of that decade (see Robert Charles Anderson, "A Note on the Pace of the Great Migration," The New England Quarterly 59 [1986]:406-07). As a rough estimate, about 15 percent of the immigrants to New England arrived in the fourteen years from 1620 to 1633, with the remaining 85 percent coming over in half as many years, from 1634 to 1640.

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BERNARD CAPEN

ORIGIN: Dorchester, Dorsetshire

MIGRATION: 1633

FIRST RESIDENCE: Dorchester

OCCUPATION: Shoemaker.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: Admission to Dorchester church prior to 25 May 1636 implied by freemanship. He did not join the second church of Dorchester after its organization in August of 1636.

FREEMAN: 25 May 1636 [[MBCR](#) 1:371].

OFFICES: On 2 October 1636 ordered by Dorchester to replace one barrel of [gun]powder [[DTR](#) 19].

ESTATE: Granted four acre lot in Dorchester, 5 August 1633 [[DTR](#) 2]; 30 acre Great Lot granted to "Bernard Gapin and his son," 4 January 1635/6 [[DTR](#) 14]; "Barnard and John Gapin shall have 2 acres in the marsh next Goodman Grenwayes," 27 June 1636 [[DTR](#) 17]; with others, granted "ground adjoining to their home lots," 2 January 1637/8 [[DTR](#) 25]; granted two lots each of two acres and a fraction, 18 March 1637/8 [[DTR](#) 31]; granted lot #8, 6 acres, in Meadow beyond Naponset [[DTR](#) 321]. (Two other small parcels of land granted on 2 January 1637/8 to "Good: Gapin" may be intended for Bernard [[DTR](#) 27, 28]). In his will, dated 9 October 1638 and probated 19 November 1652, "Barnard Capen" bequeathed to his son John five acres out of his great lot, the residue to his wife during her life, "and when it shall appear her days draw to an end, that she with the rest of my friends whom I put in trust, to divide these lands and goods to my children equally," naming trustees "Mr. Minit the elder, my brother George Dyer & Will[ia]m Sumner" [[SPR](#) 1:84]. Given the terms of the document, probate of the will was presumably delayed until the widow's last illness, as she died just four months later.

BIRTH: About 1562 based on age at death, but this may be an exaggeration, judging by date of marriage.

DEATH: Dorchester 8 November 1638, aged 76 [[NEHGR](#) 2:80, 5:97].

MARRIAGE: 31 May 1596 Joan Purchase, daughter of Oliver Purchase [[NEHGR](#) 2:80]; born about 1578 based on age at death; admitted to second church of Dorchester, probably about 1638 [[DChR](#) 4]; she died Dorchester 26 March 1653, aged 75 [[NEHGR](#) 2:80].

CHILDREN:

i JAMES, b. say 1598; on 3 September 1628 "James Capen of Holborne in the County of Middlesex, scrivener," made his nuncupative will, bequeathing all to his mother "Joane Capen the wife of Barnard Capen of Dorchester in the County of Dorset, shoemaker," out of which she was to make payments of £4 apiece to his "four sisters unmarried"; witnesses were Barnard Capen the younger and Jerom[e] Wolverton [[NEHGR](#) 49:489, citing [PCC](#) 83 Barrington].

ii RUTH, b. 7 August 1600 [[NEHGR](#) 2:80]; no further record (unless she is one of the four unmarried sisters named in the will of her brother James Capen).

iii SUSANNA, b. 11 April 1602 [[NEHGR](#) 2:80]; m. (1) Holy Trinity, Dorchester, Dorsetshire, 14 April 1624 WILLIAM ROCKWELL [[Dorset Marr](#) . 7:9]; m. (2) Windsor 29 May 1645 MATTHEW GRANT , as his second wife.

iv DOROTHY, b. say 1608; m. Holy Trinity, Dorchester, Dorsetshire, 17 January 1629/30 NICHOLAS UPSALL [[Dorset Marr](#) . 7:10].

v ELIZABETH, b. say 1610; m. Holy Trinity, Dorchester, Dorsetshire, 18 October 1630 THOMAS SWIFT [[Dorset Marr](#) . 7:10].

vi JOHN, b. 26 January 1612 [[NEHGR](#) 2:80]; freeman 14 May 1634 [[MBCR](#) 1:369]; m. (1) Dorchester 20 October 1637 Redegon Clap [[NEHGR](#) 2:80]; m. (2) 20 September 1647 Mary Bass [[NEHGR](#) 2:80]; daughter of SAMUEL BASS .

vii HONOR, b. say 1616; married about 1636 William Hannum [the will of Dorothy (Capen) Upsall, widow of NICHOLAS UPSALL , names, among others, sister Honor Hannum].

ASSOCIATIONS: Joan Purchase, wife of **Bernard Capen**, was sister of AQUILA PURCHASE , who set sail for New England on the same ship with Capen, but died during the voyage.

In his will Capen appoints as one of his trustees "my brother George Dyer." This would seem to indicate a kinship relation, probably by marriage, rather than brotherhood in the church; see GEORGE DYER for further discussion on this point.

COMMENTS: 26 February 1632/3: "This day Christofer Gould married with Rachell Beake, and shortly after, when Aquila Purchas, Bernard Gapen and others went for New England, he was by Mr. White chosen clerk of Trinity Parish, and by the town schooolmaster of Trinity School" [[Whiteway](#) 129]. This places **Bernard Capen** and his family on the unnamed Weymouth ship which arrived in Boston about 24 July 1633 [[WJ](#) 1:129].

In his nuncupative will of late August 1633, John Russell of Dorchester requested that "in the disposing of his goods to Dorchester, there should be especial respect had to old Dorchester people, naming Goodman Caping" [[MBCR](#) 1:153].

Several of the dates of vital events for this family come from a Bible record published in 1848; since the Bible was printed in 1615, and those dates that can be checked are accurate, this material seems quite reliable [[NEHGR](#) 2:80].

The will of James Capen refers to four unmarried sisters, three of whom must be Dorothy, Elizabeth and Honor. The fourth could be Ruth, although there is no evidence for her other than her birth record. In the Holy Trinity, Dorchester, church records is the marriage on 4 August 1629 of Robert Guifford and Hannah Capen [[Dorset Marr](#) 7:10], who could be another candidate for this fourth unmarried sister. "Barnard Capen the younger" who witnessed the will of James Capen may also have been a child of **Bernard Capen** the immigrant, but he may equally as well have been a cousin or nephew [[NEHGR](#) 49:490].

[Beginning The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633, Volumes I-III](#)

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