

## The Vassall Family

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The history of my Vassall family in New England starts with William Vassall and his wife Anna King. He first came to New England on the Arabella, in 1628. He and his brother Samuel were assistants of the Mass. Bay company. They were the sons of John Vassall, builder and owner of the Mayflower and other ships.

William seems to have been one of my trouble makers in the colony. If one reads the snippets from various books that mention him, he is always referred to as fractious. The first impression of him may not always be a good one, unless you take a closer look at the events and circumstances of the day. Closer inspection reveals a man of great convictions in the rights and freedoms of his fellow Englishman. He seems to have worked very hard for religious tolerance. Its no wonder the governors and assistants found him to be fractious. William and his brother Samuel, along with Mr. Symon Whetcombe and [William Pynchon](#) were chosen by [John and Samuel Browne](#) to speak on their behalf, when hauled before the court for reading out of the Book of Prayer. William was not a Congregationalist as were most of the Puritan leads, he was most likely a Prebyterian or maybe still Episcopalian.

William Vassall returned to England in 1646 supporting the bill for Liberty of Conscience (referred to as the Remonstrance). Proposing with Dr. Robert Child, Samuel Maverick, Thomas Burton, Thomas Fowle, David Yale, John Dand and John Semith, that all members of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland be admitted to communion in the New England church, they forced an unwelcome examination of the legality of the colonial government. A book was written in response to the petition by Mr. Winslow, and the petition met with no sympathy. Frustrated by the lack of attention for the bill, William moved to Barbados.

### About The Vassall Family

The Vassalls were an ancient Catholic family of Normandy, which included two cardinals and a marshal of France; but Jean Vassall became a Huguenot and fled to England a few years before the massacre of St. Bartholomew. They were of the Episcopalian faith and supports of the revolution against the authority of King Charles. Most of the Vassalls were loyal to the British crown during the American

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Revolution. In consequence the entire family was exiled and their estates confiscated. After their return to England in 1776 members of the family distinguished themselves in the British army and navy. The seven Mansions still standing (in 1917) in Brattle street, Cambridge, Mass. known as "Tory Row," which included the home of Longfellow and "Elmwood" the birthplace of James Russell Lowell, were in 1774 the homes of the Vassall family.

### **John Vassall**

John Vassall was born about in Caen, Normandie, France about 1524. He married at least once, abt 1543, one known son, John, was born to him.

John Vassall, born 1544 in Normandy France married on September 23, 1569 in Ratcliffe, Middlesex, England to Anne Russell. He died in Sept. 13, 1625 at Stepney, Essex, England. Anne died May 5, 1593 in Stepney, England. The records at the parish church of St. Dunstan's states he died "of the plague"

1) John Vassall was the builder and owner of the Mayflower that brought the Pilgrims to the shores of Cape Cod.

2) John was probably a religious refugee from France, with position and security in England, who fitted out and commanded 2 ships, (Samuel and Tobey jr.) against the Spanish Armada, and was later a member of the Virginia Company. (Dictionary of American Biography, v.19, pg. 230)

3) John was an alderman of London, who, in 1588, at his own expense, fitted out and commanded two ships war with which he joined the royal navy to oppose the Spanish Armada... (NEH&GR, Jan 1871, page 39)

4) John describes himself in his will as a mariner, of French extraction. His father John sent him to England during the religious troubles in France from his home in Normandy. He seems to have been recognized as an authority in questions of navigation, as we find him recommended to be examined by the judge of admiralty as to the skill of the pilot in a suit respecting the wreck of a vessel on the Goodwin sands in 1577. In 1588 he fitted out and commanded a vessel of 140 tons to serve against the Spanish Armada.

5) In Harleian MS.168, f.177, his vessel is called the Samuel, while in the state papers in the record office it appears as the Solomon. (Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XX. Lond; Oxford Univ. press, 1938)

6) He was a member of the Virginia Company, which made

the settlement at Jamestown in 1607.

John's spouse Anna Russell, born in Radcliffe, England.  
Married September 4, 1580 in St. Dunstan's, Stepney Died  
1593

**John and Ann's Children were:** >Judith, John (died as a  
infant), Samuel 2nd son, John, \***William 4th son**, and Ann.

### Samuel Vassall

Samuel was probably the largest ship owner of his day and was the first to refuse to pay the tax of tonnage and poundage. As a result, his property was seized and he himself thrown into prison for sixteen years by the Star Chamber Court. In 1641 the Long Parliament voted him over ten thousand pounds damages and resolved that he should be further recompensed for his personal suffering, but this was never paid.

When the Parliamentary Party was in its greatest straits during the Civil War, he repeatedly loaned sums of money to Parliament and also placed his ships at its disposal, among those thus employed being the famous "Mayflower." Later the Commonwealth was established, he headed a subscription list with 1,200 to carry on the war in Ireland.

Samuel never came to America, although he was interested in the launching of Rhode Island Colony, being associated in that enterprise with Oliver Cromwell, Sir Harry Cane and other members of Parliament. He and his brother William were both named as assistants to the governor in the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. William Vassall came to Boston with Governor Winthrop in the "Arabella".

In Kings Chapel, Boston there is a baroque bust monument of Samuel Vassall, which was erected in 1766 by his great grandson, Florentius Vassal, of the Island of Jamaica, whose granddaughter and heiress was the celebrated Lady Holland, for over forty years the mistress of Holland House in London. The monument is constructed of colored marbles and adorned with a bust and the arms of the Vassal family, granted by Queen Elizabeth to John Vassall father of Samuel and William on account of his services against the Spanish Armada.

Samuel's son, John Vassall settled in Jamaica in the West Indies, but the latter's son Major Leonard Vassall, lived in Boston, where in 1727, he built a beautiful home in Summer street. At about the same period Leonard Vassall also built for himself a summer home at Braintree (now Quincy), in

which the parlor is paneled in mahogany for the West Indian forests. Later this house became the home of the Adams family which gave two presidents to the US.

### **\*William Vassall**

William Vassall was born in 1593 in Stepney, England. He died 1655 in Barbados. He was married to Ann King in 1618.

"William Vassall, Esq., born 1593 in Stepney, England. Died 1655 in Barbadoes at the age of 62. He married in 1618 to Anne King, born 1593. They had 6 children who came over to America and are confirmed in Tepper (pg. 30). One child was Judith Vassall who married Resolved White of the Mayflower White family.

William Vassall first came in 1630 on the Arabella, as one of the assistants of the Mass. Bay Co. to Salem, Mass. He returned to England in the fall of 1630 on the "Lyon".

He returned to America on the "Blessing", around July 1635, at the age of 42 with his wife, age 42, and settled at Roxbury. His wife joined the church in 1638. They moved to Scituate and were admitted to the church around 11/28/1636. They took the oath of allegiance to the Plymouth colony on 2/1/1638. He moved to Marshfield, about 1643, where he was again a town officer.

### 4) Ship the Blessing 1635

<http://www.primenet.com/~langford/spls/635ne005.htm>

Vassall, Ann . . . . . 42

Vassall, Ann . . . . . 6 \* Listed together in this order.

Vassall, Margaret . . . . 2 \*

Vassall, Mary . . . . . 1 \*

Vassall, Francis . . . . 12 (Entered as "Fra.")

Vassall, Judith . . . . . 16

Vassall, William . . . . 42

Vassell, Jo: . . . . . 10

William did not agree with the attitude of Mass. Bay and Plymouth governments towards persons who's opinions in politics and religion differed from the puritan line. He used his influences for greater charity toward the Quakers, etc. The elders expressed their disapproval towards his outspokenness. The church of Plymouth sent him a message by way of John Cook, which is recorded in the book of the second Church, Scituate, dated April 14, 1645; hoping he would desist from proceedings intended, and questioned if they would commune with him if he continued. He went to England in 1646 with a petition to Parliament for the liberty of English subjects." (NEH&GR, Jan 1863, page

58)

6)He settled in Scituate, but in 1634, provoked by the persecution to which the Episcopalians were subjected, he returned to England. Later he went to Barbados and died there. His son Captain John Vassall, Sold the Situate estate in 1661, but the daughters married and remained in this country.

**\*Frances Vassall,**

born in England 1623, married [James Adams](#), of Scituate, son of John Adams of the "Fortune," July 16, 1646. Savage states that as the daughter of an original patentee who had probably received nothing for his money advanced to the colony, she received from the Federal Court in 1672 a grant of 150 acres. She was the mother of Margaret Adams, 1654-1737, who married [John Pease](#), one of the founders of Enfield, and became the mother of the first child born there.

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[See direct line to my NY Terrys](#)

**Other interesting Vassall Information**

[Vassall and the Incorporation of Town](#)

From: The Early Planters of Scituate

[Vassall and the Division of State and Church](#)

From: The Early Planters of Scituate

[My Vassall Line](#)

From: the LDS web site.

[Notes on Samuel Vassall](#)

from Chronicles of the First Planters

[An image of a house](#) that once belonged to the Vassall:

The Longfellow house in Cambridge Mass.

**Related web sites of interest:**

The Charter of Massachusetts Bay : 1629

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/mass03.htm>

1630, THE WINTHROP FLEET:

Eleven vessels brought 'the Great Emigration' of this year, viz: ARBELLA the flagship  
AMBROSE, WILLIAM AND FRANCIS, TALBOT,  
HOPEWELL, JEWEL, WHALE, CHARLES,  
SUCCESS, MAYFLOWER, TRIAL

The first five ships sailed April 8 from Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, and arrived at Salem, June 13 and following

days. The other half of the fleet sailed in May and arrived in July at various dates. Altogether they brought about seven hundred passengers.

<http://members.aol.com/dcurtin1/gene/winthrop.htm>

Some of this information was found on the Internet, with embellishments from the book, Abbey Memorial, second edition 1917, The Great Margination Begins, Early Planters of Situate, and my line of descendants from the LDS web site and other sources.

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[Directories & Member Lists](#) | [Family & Local Histories](#) | [Newspapers & Periodicals](#) | [Court, Land](#)  
[Aids](#)