

The Fate of Abraham Josselyn aboard *Ye Good Fame* of New York,

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Abraham Josselyn is noted by many historians as having lost his life aboard the ship *Ye Good Fame of New Yorke* sometime between the making of his Will on 16th March 1669 and the proving of that Will on or about 17th April 1670. His Will, as recorded in the records of the Surrogate's Office of New York, indicate he was "very sicke & weak" at the time of the making of the Will. It is doubtful he survived long after rendering and signing it.

Long fascinated by the rather romantic place of dying ("seventeen miles off the coast of Virginia, aboard the ship *Ye Good Fame of New Yorke*"), my research has disproven many of my favorite theories as to the cause of his death: 1) that the ship was capsized by a storm; 2) that the ship sank after colliding with an obstacle at sea; and 3) that the ship was fired upon by Dutch sailors and Abraham Josselyn lost his life as a result of battle. Thus, my research into the history of the ship itself.

The history of *Ye Good Fame* is enmeshed with the history of the State of New York. New Netherland, as New York was called by the Dutch in 1664, was taken by the Englishman mariner, Colonel Richard Nicolls. It was the opinion of the Crown of England that the Dutch were "encroaching" upon the land which belonged, by right, to England. Although Col. Nicolls' personal account of the retaking of New Amsterdam (New Netherland) was lost at sea, other versions have survived. One of those documents was entitled *Original Papers* (penned by the Duke of York who later became King James II) and provides the following history of this event:

"The Duke of York, borrowing of the king two ships of war, sent Sir Richard Nicholas, groom of the bed-chamber and an old officer, with three hundred men to take possession of the country; which the Dutch gave up on composition, without being blockaded..., Colonel Nicholas remained there in peaceable possession of the country; and then called it New York and the Fort of River Albany. All this happened before the breaking of the first Dutch war." [autobiographical notes of James II]

Colonel Nicolls was named first Governor of New York for his troubles. The son of a lawyer, his mother was a daughter of Sir George Bruce. He was "splendidly educated" and spoke Dutch and French as well as he did English. He served the Crown well in settling disputes among the various nationalities, including the Dutch and English settlers; and quieted unrest among the Native Indian tribes; established the first laws and organized the colony so that ongoing discussion could be had to settle new disputes. It is said of Nicolls:

"Nicolls was just then reconstructing the government of his province along English lines; and, laboring more conscientiously, more intel-

ligerly, and with more patience, cheerfulness, tact, and good-will than could have been expected of a soldier charged with a civilian's tasks, an Englishman set to govern Dutchmen, a courtier not yet forty years of age exiled from Whitehall to the edge of the world, he had almost finished the work before he heard that war had been declared in Europe."

Although he served the colony and the Crown well, he became tired and frustrated at the entanglement of rules that drained not only his mental and physical energies, but his pocketbook as well. One constant complaint: the little colony needed ships to maintain commerce among other colonies in order to sustain itself. The Crown, not wishing to provide too much freedom among these independent and tough-minded colonists, resisted. Those ships which did sail between the colonies were, ultimately, forced to sail to England with their cargo, permit inspection, pay the fees and taxes levied, and only then deliver their goods to the intended colonial port. New York merchants, eager to find markets for their goods, determined to build their own ship(s) to this end. The first ship, the *King Charles*, was followed shortly by a ship whose name was not noted and is lost to history. A bit of history concerning the *King Charles* helps to understand the plight of those merchants:

Jacob Janse Schermerhooren was commissary to the General Privileged West India Company, and was also one of a court of three commissaries (magistrates) at Beverwycke and Fort Orange (Albany), in 1652, 1654, 1656, 1657, 1664, 1666, 1674, and 1675." The records of this court also show that in 1654 he visited Amsterdam, where his father, Jan Schermerhooren, was then living.' He again visited his native land in 1668, and there loaded the ship "King Charles" with goods for the Colony. The ship was prohibited from sailing to New York, and on December 11, 1668, Schermerhooren petitioned King Charles II for his permission to depart with his ship from the Trexel, "where it hath lain many days ready to sail, and now lies there at great hazard on account of the season of the year." The permission was subsequently granted by the orders of the King, through the Duke of York. Lord High Admiral of England. [Genealogy of a part of the third branch of the Schermerhorn family in the United States, Author, Louis Younglove Schermerhorn, 1840.]

The colonists also resisted a plan by the King to permit two Scotch ships to sail into their harbors, fish in their seas and carry cargo bound for their markets.

Ultimately, Nicolls was permitted to step down from the position of Governor. His successor was one, the "Right Honorable Colonel" Francis Lovelace. Lovelace was about 38 when he accepted this post. It was believed he was, like Nicolls, a single man but history has shown he may have married "beneath his place" and been forced to leave his wife in England. He brought with him two of his brothers. It is recorded that, "although in every way a

weaker man than Nicolls", Lovelace attempted to maintain the double thrust of Nicolls' success: "mingled conciliation and firm justice." Lovelace is reported to have served his post well, all in all, as he was both an amiable and intelligent leader.

Appointed in 1668, he

"interested himself in better ferriage, roads and transportation by land and water, and the regulation of trade and extension of commerce. He instituted the first merchant's exchange and the first haven master of the port. He promoted shipbuilding and himself owned a fine ship, *The Good Fame of New York*. He extended settlements and laid out new villages and townships, and by purchase for the Duke, freed Staten Island from Indian control."

Lovelace continued the work begun by Nicolls in fortifying the settlement by strengthening of the fortifications themselves and by raising foot companies and troops of horses which were constantly in training. His last effort on behalf of his growing settlement was to establish a continuous post road between New York and Boston, thus instituting the first postal service as well as setting forth the means for management of the system: a postmaster with a small amount of monies raised to pay his salary.

Unfortunately, this last effort on behalf of the young settlement cost Lovelace the respect of the Crown, in fact earning him a trip to the Tower of London and dishonor. For, during Lovelace's trip to Boston in 1673 to cement the final arrangements for that fledgling postal service, the Dutch moved into New York, overtaking the settlement in his absence. He was granted full blame. He contracted dropsy after lengthy incarceration in the damp and drafty Tower of London and died two years later in full disgrace, penniless and wrongfully blamed.

It is Lovelace's efforts to provide the merchants of infant New York with a means to conduct commerce that we will now explore. He entered into a joint venture with sixteen merchants to have *Ye Good Fame* built, at a very dear cost for that time and place. One Samuel Maverick had been enticed to settle there by Nicolls who induced the Duke to gift Maverick with a house confiscated as part of the property of the West India Company. It was on 'the Broadway' as the former Heere Weg was then called. After Nicolls' return to England, Maverick wrote to him of newsworthy events, including the building of the *Good Fame*.

"The governor with some partners is building a ship of 120 ton by AThomas Hall's house...another of 60 or 70 ton is building at Gravesend."

A few months later, Maverick reported to Nicolls that the governor's ship had been recently launched and named *The Good Fame of New York* and that it was a "very strong and handsome vessel, but costly." Used initially in continuance

of the West India trade routes, the ship was *sent to Virginia* and then to England. (\*)

It may be assumed that it was during this trip to Virginia that Abraham Josselyn met his Maker aboard *Ye Good Fame of New Yorke*. The timing would be right and it is documented that the Good Fame was taken by Dutch privateers in 1673 after this voyage:

The last of the Anglo-Dutch wars put a temporary stop to Lovelace's involvement in foreign trade, when Dutch privateers took the *Good Fame* at either Tixel or Sandy Hook in 1673. That same year Steenwyck lost his ship *James*; Thomas Delaval lost the *Margaret*, and Frederick Philipse lost the *Frederick*. But these and other losses, including the surrender of the city to the Dutch for one year, only underscored how vital the Dutch trade could be for supplying the city. Indeed, many of the city's Dutch paused long enough with English residents to consider which mother country was, as Capt. John Manning put it, the greater "enemy in our Bowells." [The Hollander Interest and Ideas about Free Trade in Colonial New York: Persistent Influences of the Dutch, 1664-1764 by Cathy Matson, History Department, University of Delaware.]

According to "THE JOCELYN-JOSLIN-JOSLYN-JOSSELYN FAMILY"; Compiled by Edith S. Wessler, Produced by Charles E. Tuttle Company of Rutland Vermont and Tokyo, Japan, copyright in Japan, 1961. Library of congress Catalog Card No. 61-11559. first edition 1962. Page #81, family #35 reads as follows:

"Abraham was largely interested in commerce, and probably owned several ships sailing between Plymouth and England. He was a proprietor of Black Point (Scarborough) Maine; a member of the Grand Jury there in 1659, the year he sold his property and went to Lancaster, Mass., where his father lived.

"Abraham, Scarborough, with his wife, sold 200 acres of land 27 October 1659; deed witnessed by Henry and Margaret Joselyn; removed to Boston with wife Beatrice; sold land at Scarborough which had been in his possession for "divers years past." This land was sold to Mr. Scottow, 8 June 1660. It included "Josselyn's great hill, later known as Scottow's Hill."

By 1663, Abraham had rejoined the rest of the family in Lancaster, where he maintained his residence until his death. He was a man of enterprise and some wealth, and evidently a daring and hearty mariner, considering the size of the ships of that day. Sloops and ketches measured more than fifty or sixty feet in length, and ranged in size from forty to sixty tons."

It is not known whether Abraham Josselyn shared in the ownership of *Ye Good Fame*, but it is doubtful since his Will makes no mention of it. However, one other assumption may be made concerning Abraham's position aboard the *Good Fame*. Considering the level of education which may be assumed by Abraham's delayed trip to the New World in order for him to *complete his education*, coupled with the social position he and his father Thomas Josselyn (the Immigrant) enjoyed, it may be assumed he was no common mariner. Those facts and other common sense suppositions indicate that Abraham Josselyn was probably the Captain of *Ye Good Fame of New York*. This assumption is bolstered by the following notation found in a study of the Joslin, Joceline, Josselyn, Joslyn family which, in a footnote, includes the following:

14 "My Great Grand-Father **Capt Abraham Josselyn** was Born in England in Essex . . . Uncle Joseph took this account from h

The cause of Abraham's death may never now be determined. From the section of the Will where he indicates he is both "very sicke & a

(\*) Based upon calculations by Francis Turner which are contained in a separate story here, Francis Lovelance and his sixteen me

#### SOURCES:

- 1) History of the City of New York in the Seventeenth Century, Vol II; by Schuyler Van Rensselaer; published by The Macmillan Company 1909;
- 2) History of the city of New York; its origin, rise, and progress by Martha Joanna Lamb, Burton Harrison, published by A. S. Barnes, 1896
- 3) The Hollander Interest and Ideas about Free Trade in Colonial New York: Persistent Influences of the Dutch, 1664-1764 by Cathy Matson, History Department, University of Delaware.
- 4) *Original Papers*, Duke of York, later King James II, autobiographical notes;
- 5) The Genealogical Advertiser: A Quarterly Magazine of Family History, edited by Lucy Hall Greenlaw; published by Lucy H. Greenlaw, 1901;
- 6) Wikipedia: Col. Francis Lovelace, with Annotations;
- 7) State of New York, Historical Papers, Surrogate's Office, compiled.
- 8) "THE JOCELYN-JOSLIN-JOSLYN-JOSSELYN FAMILY"; Compiled by Edith S. Wessler, Produced by Charles E. Tuttle Company of Rutland Vermont and Tokyo, Japan, copyright in Japan, 1961. Library of congress Catalog Card No. 61-11559. First edition 1962. Page #81, family #35.
- 9) Money and exchange rates in 1632 by Francis Turner.
- 10) Before the Melting Pot, by Joyce D. Goodfriend