

A Fresh Look at Immigrant Joseph¹ Twitchell of Dorchester, Massachusetts

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In 1929 Ralph Emerson Twitchell published *Genealogy of the Twitchell Family*. He found records in the parish registers of Chesham, Buckinghamshire, for the family of Richard and Cecily (Waller) Twitchell. This couple was married in 1581 and had eight children baptized in this parish: Joseph (1582), Mary (1584), Martha (1586), Anne (1589), Sarah (1591), Lazarus (1594), Miriam (1596), and Benjamin (1599).^[1] Twitchell concluded that Joseph and Benjamin, sons of Richard Twitchell, were the two men of those same names who were early at Dorchester, Massachusetts.^[2] He also noted the marriage of this Joseph Twitchell with Elizabeth Lovet, daughter of James Lovet, and that her father made a bequest to her in his will “if she demands it,” although he did not mention the date of this will.^[3] In addition, Twitchell found a baptism in Chesham for a son Joseph of this couple in 1614[5].^[4]

Robert Charles Anderson in 1995 did not accept Ralph Twitchell’s assertion that the brothers Joseph and Benjamin Twitchell of Chesham had immigrated to New England. His reasoning was that it made “both men much older than they appear to be from New England records” and he observed that “Benjamin Twitchell would be about 50 years old at his marriage to Mary Riggs.” Anderson proposed that Benjamin Twitchell of Dorchester was probably the son of Joseph¹ Twitchell, the immigrant to New England in 1633.^[5] In 2004 Dean Crawford Smith and Melinde Lutz Sanborn accepted that Joseph Twitchell of Chesham was the immigrant to New England. As they noted, he, as well as his wife Elizabeth, were living in 1633/4 when both were mentioned in her father’s will.^[6] This possibly explains why Elizabeth’s father conditioned his bequest to her with “if she demands it,” as she and her husband were in New England in 1633. Smith and Sanborn also found that Benjamin Twitchell of

¹ Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *Genealogy of the Twitchell Family: Record of the Descendants of the Puritan Benjamin Twitchell, Dorchester, Lancaster, Medfield and Sherborn, Massachusetts, 1632–1927* (New York: privately printed, 1929), xii.

² *Ibid.*, xii.

³ *Ibid.*, xiii (the source of the will not given).

⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁵ Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1633*, 3 vols. (Boston: NEHGS, 1995), 3:1855–1856 (sketch of Joseph Twitchell), at 1856.

⁶ Dean Crawford Smith, *The Ancestry of Eva Belle Kempton, 1878–1908, Part III: The Ancestry of Henry Clay Bartlett, 1832–1892*, Melinde Lutz Sanborn, ed. (Boston: NEHGS, 2004), 425. By 2015 Anderson concurred with Smith and Sanborn (Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1640, A Concise Compendium* [Boston: NEHGS, 2015], 344).

Chesham was apprenticed to a London livery company at age 20 and therefore was unlikely to be the Dorchester immigrant.^[7]

Records have now been found in London that prove that Benjamin Twitchell of Chesham could not have immigrated to New England, as he died in London in 1635 (see below). As Joseph Twitchell of Chesham had a child born there in 1614/5 and as the parish registers appear to be complete for the period 1615–1633, he probably resided elsewhere if he had additional children. A search of parishes within a 20-mile radius of Chesham has found the following in the parishes of Heston, Middlesex, about 20 miles south of Chesham, and in the parish of Isleworth, Middlesex, a parish just south of Heston:

Heston, Middlesex^[8]

22 February 1617/8	Baptism	Benjamin Twitchell filius Josephi Twitchell
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Isleworth, Middlesex^[9]

24 April 1620	Baptism	Joseph Twichell & Elizabeth his wife had there daugh[torn] Ba[blot]ua baptized
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13 October 1622	Baptism	Joseph Twichell & Elizabeth his wyfe had [their] daught[e]r Mary baptized
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29 September 1625	Burial	Josephe sone of Josephe Twichell
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It is almost certain that these records pertain to the immigrant as these baptisms follow nicely after the 1614/5 baptism of their son Joseph in Chesham; the burial of the son Joseph links with the baptism in Chesham; and the baptism of a son Benjamin corresponds with the proposed son of the immigrant.

The above information is used in the following updated genealogical summary for Joseph¹ Twitchell.

Genealogical Summary

1. **RICHARD^A TWITCHELL** was born say 1556 (assuming age 25 at marriage) and he married in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, 14 November 1581, **CICELY WALLER** as “Rychard Twytchell weau[er] & Cicely wawller daughter to the widoe Byrche.”^[10] He was buried there on 6 April 1619.^[11] The will of “Richard Twitchell of Chesham in the countie of Bucks: yeoman” dated 18 December 1617 and proved 23 April 1619 gave to “my sonnes Lazarous & Beniamyn . . . when they shall accomplish the age of eighte and twentie yeares . . . my three daughters Martha, Sarah, and Miriam . . . my daughter Hannah the wife of

⁷ Smith and Sanborn, *The Ancestry of Eva Belle Kempton, 1878–1908, Part III* [note 6], 425.

⁸ St. Leonard, Heston, Middlesex, parish register, 1560–1705, *London, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538–1812*, database at Ancestry.com, image 28 of 149 (Borough: Hounslow), citing London Metropolitan Archives, DRO/026/A/01/001.

⁹ Isleworth, Middlesex, parish register, 1566–1748 [FSL DGS 8041035, images 75 (baptism of daughter in 1620), 79 (Mary’s baptism), and 85 (Joseph’s burial)].

¹⁰ *A Transcript of the First Volume, 1538–1636, of the Parish Register of Chesham, in the County of Buckingham*, J. W. Garrett-Pegge, transcriber (London: Elliot Stock, 1904), 189. This was the source used in Twitchell, *Genealogy of the Twitchell Family* [note 1], xix–xxii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

Willyam Tyler . . . Cicely my wife, whome I make full and whole executrix . . . my sonne Joseph.” His will named “my loveinge freinde Richard Byrch and my sonne in lawe Willyam Tyler” overseers.^[12]

Children of Richard^A and Cicely (Waller) Twitchell (all baptized in Chesham^[13]):

- 2 i. JOSEPH¹ TWITCHELL, bp. 27 May 1582; m. ELIZABETH LOVETT.
- ii. MARY TWITCHELL, bp. 2 Aug. 1584; not mentioned in her father’s 1617 will.
- iii. MARTHA TWITCHELL, bp. 29 Jan. 1586/7, living 18 Dec. 1617 (her father’s will); perhaps m. Amersham, Buckinghamshire, 28 Sept. 1618, Thomas Buckingham.^[14]
- iv. ANNE/HANNAH TWITCHELL, bp. 5 Oct. 1589, living 18 Dec. 1617 (her father’s will); m. Chesham, 12 May 1614, WILLIAM TYLER.^[15]
- v. SARAH TWITCHELL, bp. 23 Jan. 1591/2, living 18 Dec. 1617 (her father’s will); perhaps m. Amersham, 22 Jan. 1623, George Laurance.^[16]
- vi. LAZARUS TWITCHELL, bp. 1 April 1594, probably bur. Barking, Essex, 15 March 1656/7.^[17] On 29 April 1611 he was apprenticed for eight years to a master of the Clothworkers’ Company of London.^[18]
- vii. MIRIAM TWITCHELL, bp. 10 Oct. 1596, living 18 Dec. 1617 (her father’s will); probably m. Chesham, 10 May 1621, Nehemiah Spriggins.^[19]
- viii. BENJAMIN TWITCHELL, bp. 10 June 1599, bur. St. Botolph Aldgate, London, 27 July 1635 as “Benjamyn Twitchell Cittizen and browne baker of London;”^[20] m. by 1628, PRUDENCE _____ (baptism of eldest known child).^[21] On 18 Oct. 1619 the Brown Bakers’ Company of London recorded “Richarde Nashe a freema[n] of this Co[m]pany p[rese]nted Benjamin Twitchell sonne of Richard Twitchell of Chesham in the County of Buck yeoma[n] Deceased bound vnto him by Indenture for terme of

¹² Archdeaconry Court of Buckingham, registered wills, vol. 31, fol. 197r-197v [FSL DGS 8036429, images 215–216, citing Buckinghamshire Archives, D-A/WE/27/263] Original will in box 23, no. 106 [FSL DGS 8094005, images 765–766, citing Buckinghamshire Archives, D-A/WF/23/106]. A more detailed abstract is in Smith and Sanborn, *The Ancestry of Eva Belle Kempton, 1878–1908, Part III* [note 6], 426.

¹³ *Parish Register of Chesham* [note 10], 49 (Joseph), 53 (Mary), 58 (Martha), 63 (Anne/Hannah), 68 (Sarah), 72 (Lazarus), 76 (Miriam), and 81 (Benjamin).

¹⁴ Amersham, Buckinghamshire, parish register, 1561–1661 [FSL DGS 8100526, image 159]. Amersham is immediately south of Chesham.

¹⁵ *Parish Register of Chesham* [note 10], 218.

¹⁶ Amersham parish register [note 14], image 159.

¹⁷ St. Margaret, Barking, Essex, parish burial register, 1653–1772, online at essexarchivesonline.co.uk, image 8, “Lazarus Twitchell,” citing Essex Record Office, D/P 81/1/5.

¹⁸ The Clothworkers’ Company, Registers of Apprentices, 1606–1908, abstract from Records of London’s Livery Companies Online at londonroll.org (apprentice “Lazarus Twichell,” father “Rici Twichell, Chessham, Buckinghamshire,” master “Willo Twichell”).

¹⁹ *Parish Register of Chesham* [note 10], 222.

²⁰ St. Botolph Aldgate, London, parish burial register, 1625–1665, *London, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538–1812*, database at Ancestry.com, image 72 of 294 (Borough: City of London), citing London Metropolitan Archives, P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002.

²¹ All Hallows London Wall, London, parish register, 1559–1653, *London, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538–1812*, database at Ancestry.com, image 42 of 157 (Borough: City of London), “[on 29 June 1628 baptized] John the sonne of Benjamin & Prudence Twickell,” citing London Metropolitan Archives, P69/ALH5/A/001/MS05083.

Seaven yeares.”^[22] On 24 July 1635 administration on the estate of Benjamin “Twitchin” [sic] of St. Botolph Aldgate was granted to Prudence, his relict.^[23]

2. **JOSEPH¹ TWITCHELL** (*Richard*^A) was baptized in Chesham on 27 May 1582. He married there 12 May 1614, **ELIZABETH LOVETT**,^[24] daughter of James^A and Joan (_____) Lovett.^[25] He immigrated to New England by 1633 and settled at Dorchester, Massachusetts.^[26] On 14 May 1634 Joseph was made a freeman of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.^[27] He died at Dorchester on 13 September 1657.^[28] The inventory of “goods Late belonging to Joseph Twitchell of Dorchester” was taken 8 October 1657 and on 26 November 1657 “Timothy wales [and] Benjamin Twitchell deposed this to be a true Inventory.”^[29]

Children of Joseph¹ and Elizabeth (Lovett) Twitchell:

- i. JOSEPH² TWITCHELL, bp. Chesham 12 March 1614/5, bur. Isleworth, Middlesex, 29 Sept. 1625.
- ii. BENJAMIN TWITCHELL, bp. Heston, Middlesex, 22 Feb. 1617/8, d. 17 Dec. 1681 (his inventory); m. say 1650, MARY RIGGS, daughter of Edward¹ and Elizabeth (Holmes) Riggs.^[30] The inventory of “y^e goods Debts & Estate of Benjamin Twichell of sherborn whoe deceased y^e 17 day of December 1681” was taken 23 Dec. 1681 and six days later “Joseph Twichel admitted Adm^r made Oath . . . that this is a just and true Inventory of y^e Estate of his late ffather.”^[31]

²² Worshipful Company of Brown Bakers’ of London, court minutes, 1615–1622 [FSL film 1068459 item 1, citing London Metropolitan Archives, CLC/L/BH/B/001/MS05204/001]. Smith and Sanborn stated he was apprenticed as a waxhandler (Smith and Sanborn, *The Ancestry of Eva Belle Kempton, 1878–1908, Part III* [note 6], 427), citing origins.net as the source. In 2014 Findmypast.com acquired origins.net (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Findmypast). Findmypast indicates the source of this apprenticeship record is based on “abstraction and indexing of these records . . . by Cliff Webb” (“London Apprenticeship Abstracts, 1442–1850,” database at Findmypast.com). These abstractions were published in Cliff Webb, *London Livery Company Apprenticeship Registers: Volume 31, Wax Chandlers’ Company, 1666–1800, Brown Bakers’ Company, 1615–1646* (London: Society of Genealogists, 2000). Page 32 of this work records that Benjamin Twitchell was apprenticed to the Brown Bakers’ Company.

²³ Archdeaconry Court of London, act books, vol. 6, fol. 173v [FSL DGS 8039446, image 206].

²⁴ *Parish Register of Chesham* [note 10], 218.

²⁵ Nathaniel L. Stott, “The Lovett Family of Chesham, Buckinghamshire, Ancestors of Daniel¹ Lovett and His Half-Sister Elizabeth (Lovett) Twitchell, Wife of Joseph¹ Twitchell, of Massachusetts,” *Register* 177 (2023):258–261, at 259–260.

²⁶ Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1633*, 3 vols. (Boston: NEHGS, 1995): 3:1855–1856 (sketch of Joseph Twitchell), at 1855.

²⁷ Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 vols. in 6 (Boston: William White, 1853–1854), 1:369.

²⁸ [Twenty-First] *Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston Containing Dorchester Births, Marriages, and Deaths to the End of 1825* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1891), 25 (Joseph “Tuchel”).

²⁹ Suffolk County, Massachusetts, probate files, case #173 [FSL DGS 102840310, image 190].

³⁰ Robert Charles Anderson and Alvy Ray Smith, “The Genealogy of Edward¹ Riggs of Roxbury, Massachusetts, Revisited,” *The Genealogist* 23 (2009):131–173, at 136.

³¹ Suffolk County, Massachusetts, probate files, case #1208 [FSL DGS 102889989, image 1009].

- iii. DAUGHTER TWITCHELL, bp. Isleworth 24 April 1620. She or her sister Mary possibly married Timothy Wales, son of Nathaniel¹ Wales of Dorchester and Boston, Mass.,^[32] as he deposed to the inventory of her father.
- iv. MARY TWITCHELL, bp. Isleworth 13 Oct. 1622; no further record unless she married Timothy Wales (see above).

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³² Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England, 1634–1635, Volume VII, T–Y* (Boston: NEHGS, 2011), 193–197 (sketch of Nathaniel Wales), at 195.