

**DESCENDANTS OF THE REVEREND
FRANCIS HIGGINSON, FIRST "TEACHER"
IN THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY
OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS AND
AUTHOR OF "NEW-ENGLANDS
PLANTATION" (1630)**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649747962

Descendants of the Reverend Francis Higginson, first "teacher" in the Massachusetts Bay colony of Salem, Massachusetts and author of "New-Englands plantation" (1630) by Thomas Wentworth Higginson

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THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

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OF THE

Reverend Francis Higginson

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of Salem, Massachusetts
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(1630)

BY

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PRIVATELY PRINTED
1910

SOME OLD . . .

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For a long time doubt existed and still exists as to which of the early Higginson clergymen is represented by the frontispiece here given. There are three of these portraits which I am inclined to believe to be of Francis and not of his son, John.

1. One of these, in the Boston State House, is pronounced by experts to be the original, though having an unexplained date upon it which has always cast doubt over the identity of this portrait.

2. There is another at the Essex Institute in Salem which was given to it by my father in 1835 and was regarded in his day, as it is even now by many, as a portrait of the Rev. John, the son of Francis.

3. There is yet another at Worcester, in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society which is obviously a copy of that in Boston, yet is believed in Worcester to represent Francis Higginson, the first immigrant.

The best authority on the whole subject should be the Rev. Dr. William Bentley, of Salem, Mass., the most esteemed of all antiquarians in his day. He, it was, who gave this third copy to the American Antiquarian Society and who in his "Description of Salem" (Massachusetts Historical Society's Collections for 1799, p. 275) says:—"There is an half-length painting of Francis Higginson in the council chamber, at Boston, in the old state-house". Further tradition as to the details relating to these three portraits may be found in my "Life of Francis Higginson", pp. 121-133.

T. W. H.

INTRODUCTION.

On Saturday, the 25th of April, 1629, two ships set sail from Gravesend for the two months' voyage to America. One of these was the "Talbot," and the other the "Lyon's Whelpe," and on the former of the two was Francis Higginson, first religious "teacher" in Salem, and first of the name to set foot on New England soil. Following is the "agreement" or "true note of the allowance that the New England Company gave by common consent and order of their court and counsell granted unto Mr. Francis Higginson, minister, for his maintenance in New England, April 8, 1629."

"1. Imprimis, that 30 *l.* in money shall be forthwith paid him by the Companyes treasurer towards the chardges of fitting himself with apparell and other necessaryes for his voyage.

"2. Item, that 10 *l.* more shall be payed over by the said treasurer towards the providing of books for present use.

"3. Item, that he shall have 30 *l.* yearely paid him for three yeares to beginne from the tyme of his first arrivall in New England; and so to be accounted and paid him at the end of every yeare.

"4. Item, that during the said tyme the Company shall provide for him and his family necessaryes of diett, housing and firewood; and shall be att charges of transporting him into New England: And at the end of the said 3 yeares, if he shall not like to continue there any

longer, to be at the charge of transporting him backe for England.

“5. Item, that in convenient tyme an house shall be built, and certayne lands allotted thereunto; which during his stay in the country and continuance in the ministry, shall bee for his use; and after his death or removall the same to be for succeeding ministers.

“6. Item, at the expiration of the said 3 yeares an 100 acres of land shall be assigned to him and his heires forever.

“7. Item, that in case hee shall depart this life in that country, the said Company shall take care for his widdow during her widdowhood and aboade in that country and plantation; and the like for his children whilst they remaine upon the said plantation.

“8. Item, that the milke of 2 kyne shall bee appointed towards the chardges of diete for him and his familie as aforesaid, and halfe the increase of calves during the said 3 years: But the said 2 kyne, and the other halfe of the increase to returne to the Company at the end of the said 3 years.

“9. Item, that he shall have liberty of carrying over bedding, linnen, brasse, iron, pewter, of his owne, for his necessary use during the said tyme.

“10. Item, that if he continue 7 years upon the said plantation, that then 100 acres of land more shall be allotted him for him and his for ever.

He was also promised a “man seruant to take care and look to his things, and to catch him fish and foule and provide other things needfull and also two maid seruants to look to his family.”

Francis Higginson was baptized August 6, 1586, at Claybrooke, Leicestershire, England. He was the son of the Rev. John Higginson, who was a graduate of Jesus Col-

lege, Cambridge, B. A. 1564-5, and M. A. 1568, and was afterwards vicar of the parish of Claybrooke from 1571 to 1624. There is a tradition in the Marlow (England) branch of the family that he lived and performed his duties as a clergyman until the age of one hundred and four, when he was suddenly drowned by the rising of a brook as he was returning from church. However this may be, we know that he was vicar for fifty-three years.

Of the still earlier progenitors of the family, little is on record. We know that one Joane Higginson, who may have been the paternal grandmother of Francis Higginson, dying a widow in the sixteenth century, bequeathed £7 a year to the poor of Berkeswell, County Warwick, England.

Francis Higginson was, like his father, a student of Jesus College, Cambridge, taking his B. A. degree in 1609-10, and perhaps that of M. A. in 1613. It is said that he became curate and assistant to his father at Claybrooke. We are not told how long he held this position, but it is clear that he became more and more dissatisfied with the Established Church as it then was, until finally he became "a conscientious non-conformist."

In the beginning of the year 1629, a large number of rich merchants obtained a charter from King Charles I, by which they were incorporated under the title of "The Governor and Company of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England," and their purpose was to send over ships with "godly and honest men" to begin a plantation there. Accordingly Francis Higginson was one of those asked to set sail with his family for the New World, and he arrived in Salem Harbor on June 29, 1629. With him came Samuel Skelton, another minister, who was to divide with him the duties of the church in Salem.