

“*Seaflower*”

by Ruth Major, ruthmajor.com

Introduction:

I have been researching various aspects of this article for years but noticed that the vessel *Seaflower* was sporadically popping up in my three main areas of study: Early Colonial New England Ancestors, Merchant Shipping and Shipbuilding, (17th -19th Century), and our family’s nearly-erased native line from Old Harwich. When researching, I have few preconceived notions about what I might find, but simply follow where the path leads me, as if urged on by a sea of ancestors. There is a saying I love, “*Habits are at first Cobwebs, then Cables.*” Research is like that. We find a few facts and then learn more to connect them and make them stronger. Soon a paragraph becomes a research project, then an article.

1st Generation

As many readers know, Governor Edward Winslow of Plymouth and Marshfield died, 8 May 1655, aboard a Naval vessel near Jamaica, during an expedition against the Spanish. He succumbed to an illness and died at age 59. I believe he was buried at sea. Two of Edward’s brothers, who remained in New England, were given grants of land in Green Harbor, Marshfield not far from their brother Edward’s property. Brother Josiah came to Plymouth in 1631 on the *White Angel* and settled in Marshfield on the north bank of Green River. He married Margaret Bourne in 1637 and probably moved to Marshfield around that time.

Brother Kenelm arrived with the Winthrop Fleet and was a “freeman” in Plymouth, in 1632/33, where he met and married Ellen (Newton) Adams, widow of John Adams, on 1 June 1634. Both Kenelm and Josiah received grants of 100 acres in Green Harbor, a beautiful coastal section of Marshfield, Massachusetts. The area the Winslows were granted was referred to by some early writers, such as Marcia Thomas, as “*the Eden*” of Marshfield. Kenelm and Ellen decided to build a homestead on their grant land, so moved with their four very young children and Ellen’s three older children, John, James and Susannah, to Marshfield. While building their home on Rexhame Hill, Kenelm and his family may have lived with his brother Josiah’s family, as his property was just down the hill and across a cart path from Kenelm’s property.

As I wrote in an earlier article, Kenelm Winslow was a Master, London-trained, Joiner who took in miller, John Jenny’s son, Samuel of Plymouth, as his apprentice. Over the next four years or so, Samuel learned a trade he needed to know well in order to take over his father’s grist mill in Plymouth. Kenelm needed reliable and well-trained help with all aspects of his large home building, finishing, and furnishing project. With their combined seven children, Kenelm knew he and Ellen needed a large home.

On what became known as Rexhame Hill, Kenelm built a Colonial, almost Georgian style, 36’ by 36’ house, but with only one massive central chimney that fed six fireplaces

upstairs and down. The interior wood paneling and molding were atypical, more refined than most mid -17th century New England houses. However, like his brother Edward who was trained as a printer in London, Kenelm graduated from a Joiner's Guild in London, and had the skills to create a large, fashionable home using the latest tools and techniques.

The first floor of Kenelm and Ellen's house had an open kitchen with a large, wide, central fireplace and hearth for cooking. The hearth sidewall had iron bars attached with hooks for hanging several pots and roasting meats. While there have been renovations made on the back side of the house since colonial times, the entire front side, main rooms up and downstairs, are not significantly altered. They remain as they were in the 17th Century, except for refinished floors, decorative painting, and modern furnishings.

There are two large bedrooms upstairs with high ceilings, five 12-over-12" paned windows across the upper front side, that were probably diamond shaped, variegated green-glass windows originally. Two smaller bedrooms were constructed downstairs on either side of the large central cooking area. Doors from both bedrooms opened into that warm, cooking and baking room with plenty of heat and delicious scents wafting through the house. Servant's sleeping quarters were upstairs, toward the back of the house, with a sitting room and fireplace in between, located directly above the great kitchen hearth. Back stairways allowed private access to the first-floor kitchen, basements, pantries, larder, washroom, and storage areas, without interrupting the family. The dining room and large living room, front main and upper stairways had fine hand-wrought molding, ceiling beams and 12-16" wide board flooring. The original open central stairway and upper stairway to the garret have since been removed but were originally in place just feet from the central front door. Kenelm's beautiful house was warm, inviting, and spacious even by today's standards, and miraculously, it still is!

KENELM WINSLOW'S REXHAME HOMESTEAD



Photo by Ruth Major

Youngest child, Job, was about four years old when the family moved into their house in 1645/46. Nearly 400 years later, the house is occupied by another young, vibrant family.

Way up in the 3rd floor “garret” or attic were single windows at each end of the vast open room that spanned the length of the house, except for the massive chimney which took up the center portion of the room. The garret was uninsulated and unheated but probably filled with wool and flax, spinning wheels, looms, spindles, winders, cordage, and barrels of other weaving, sewing, and spinning supplies, which may have provided some insulation, perhaps some old blankets and bedding too. Countless domestic chores had to be done every day on a large farm, and many hands were needed to make stone walls and prepare fields, plant, and harvest every item of food needed, care for sheep and other domestic animals, haul wood and harvest plants for weaving, dying and medicines, not to omit cooking, cleaning, sewing, educating and childcare. Joan Thirsk, author of “**Patterns of Agriculture in 17th Century England**,” found on the Colonial Society website, tells us that even poor men had the remedies they needed growing in their gardens.

She writes: “Other rewarding new crops serve industrial uses: coleseed for oil; hops for beer; dye plants like woad, weld, saffron, and madder for textiles, teasels for finishing cloth and hemp and flax for making rope, canvas and linen.”

OLD BARN



Old photo of the barn shared by the current owner.

Behind Kenelm’s house to the left, once stood a large barn with doors at both ends and a loft. One set of barn doors opened onto a broad field and a lower field for farming, grazing, fattening, harvesting, picking wildflowers and tending hives full of honey.

THE WOOD SHOP - Photo by R. major



Behind the house to the right was Kenelm's Wood-working Shop where I imagine he spent many years working with his sons and grandsons on building and joining projects. Kenelm made several pieces of fine furniture and a built-in "beaufet" cupboard for their fine silver and china. The hand-crafted beaufet with curved shelves was in the process of being repainted when we visited, and it remains a cherished corner of Kenelm and Ellen's Homestead.

All the interior hand-hewn beams in Kenelm's house, and the window casings, sashes, moldings, wide board floors, sturdy stair railings and newel posts, balusters and extra wide paneled doors and fireplace casings - were hand made by Kenelm and his joiner apprentice Samuel. There were a few other neighbors with carpentry skills who may have also helped finish off Kenelm and Ellen's house, including farm neighbors Joseph Beadle, and two sons of Thomas Waterman.

The King of England was not the only man to own such wide boards or logs, which were legally used in Kenelm's case, because he was "*Granted the 100 acres,*" and therefore had a right to the trees within his grant. This was true for the Waterman and Bourne landowners also and any other man whose land was granted to him.

WIDE PANELED DOOR



Extremely Wide Paneling and Carved Moldings

Photo by Paris Major

Kenelm Winslow's house is one of, if not the oldest house in the country. That this nearly 400-year-old house still stands in any form, is a testament to Kenelm's mastery of the Fine Arts of joinery, finish carpentry, and furniture and cabinetry, but it was his joinery training which set him apart from his neighbors with furniture and carpentry skills. **Kenelm was able to build houses, barns, furniture, and ships with equal skill.**

No doubt, all Kenelm and Ellen's children grew up helping and learning from both parents. However, according to Winslow expert Virginia Krusell, the Woodshed was known as a place "*for boys only!*" Not surprising, that Nathaniel Winslow's brothers, Kenelm, Jr. and Job, took a keen interest in joinery and shipbuilding. The boys, and perhaps one or both of Ellen's sons too, probably spent long hours working on projects and practicing skills in the wood shop and exterior yard with Kenelm. As I have mentioned in previous articles and heard from the mouths of boat-yard mates, "*Joiners were the highest paid and most highly regarded craftsmen in a wooden boatyard.*"

We know from the Winslow Memorial that Kenelm's youngest son, Job Winslow, worked his way up and became a shipbuilder. It is my belief that he learned the Art of ship and home building from his father, Kenelm. Ms. Krusell tells us, "*For over two hundred years there were only five farms of the five original settler families at Rexhame.*" When I co-wrote "**Connecticut River Shipbuilding**", I learned that many of my ancestors learned ship and home building skills from their grandfathers, fathers, and uncles, as well as from others in the shipbuilding and merchant shipping businesses. This manner of guided, hands-on teaching has long been a traditional way of teaching and learning the Art of wooden boat, home, barn, and furniture building. It certainly was true for generations of my (Van Der) Post ancestors who built both homes and ships for generations in Essex, Connecticut. Our immigrant Stephen Post, a noted carpenter and joiner, was chosen to build the interior and dwelling house in Connecticut, of Old Saybrook Fort in 1649, about the same time Kenelm Winslow was adding finishing touches to his house and barn in Marshfield.

2nd Generation

My ancestor Captain Nathaniel Winslow was born two years before his brother Job, in 1639, so was about 6 years old when in 1645 he moved into the new home his father built in Marshfield. Much later in his life, when in his fifties, Nathaniel was a Militia Captain, which is why he was referred to as "Captain Nathaniel Winslow" in historical records. They also reveal he was a "*captain of militia as early as 1698.*" Nathaniel married, Faith Miller on 3 August 1664, and inherited this father's homestead eight years later, when Nathaniel was age 33. This means that Nathaniel and Faith's children also spent their formative years with their grandfather Kenelm, working in his shop and probably building and sailing vessels on the rivers. Nathaniel and Faith had 8 children and brought them up at Kenelm's 1646 Rexhame Winslow Homestead.

Soon after Nathaniel and Faith were married, his brother Job moved to Swansea, MA about 1666, when Job was 25 years old. He built a house there and according to one record; Job was in Swansea 8 or 9 years before he married Ruth in 1673. Job inherited Kenelm's aptitude for joinery and carpentry, and likely inherited some of his father's tools too, as Kenelm Sr. died in 1672, the year before Job's marriage. Winslow Records state that, "*Job was a shipwright in Swansea*". At the start of the Indian wars in June of 1675, Job and Ruth Winslow's home was set ablaze by native warriors, perhaps due in part to the indigenous braves' ill feelings toward Kenelm's nephew, Josiah Winslow. His diplomatic father, Governor Edward Winslow of Plymouth, and Marshfield died 2 decades earlier. Josiah was Nathaniel, Kenelm Jr., and Job's cousin and the Commander-in Chief of the forces of the New England Confederation.

Shipwright Job and Ruth were forced by the attack on their house and other neighbor's property to flee from Swansea. After moving to Rochester for a brief time, they settled in Freetown/Assonet, where Job's father Kenelm was one of 26 original proprietors, and probably left land there. In Freetown, Job held several important town positions over the last decades of his life, and he and Ruth brought up their thirteen children. Job Winslow died on 14 July 1720 in Freetown/Bristol. Brother Kenelm, Jr. died in Rochester, MA, not far from Freetown.

3rd GENERATION

Nathaniel and Faith Winslow's son, Nathaniel, Jr., born 29 July 1667, grew up in Marshfield at his grandfather Kenelm's homestead. He must have spent considerable time with his father and grandfather in the wood shop, building interior furnishings, furniture, and vessels for use on the local rivers. Nathaniel Jr. spent his formative years in the same wood working environment as his father and uncles. Ultimately, Nathaniel, Jr. became a boat captain, probably sailing vessels his Uncle Job and Grandfather Kenelm Winslow built. My guess is that Nathaniel, Jr. saw the beauty and utility of his family's sailboats and grew up learning to sail them and hoping to earn a living by transporting goods as a commercial boat captain. We know that Nathaniel, Jr. eventually did sail a vessel named, ***Seaflower***, (which I believe Kenelm and Job built in the late 1650s and 60's. I also believe the sloop was large, sturdy and built in Marshfield.)

Governor Josiah Winslow, son of Edward and nephew of Kenelm, had the First use of ***Seaflower***. Governor Winslow must have felt the need to have a reliable vessel at the ready, as the talk of war increased, tensions mounted. I cannot prove this, but believe the governor appropriated or purchased ***Seaflower*** from his Winslow cousin, Kenelm, who most likely built that vessel with his son Job's and others' help. In times of war, it was not unusual for Colonial Governors to take, or have built, sturdy vessels for merchant maritime purposes, and the defense of their towns.

King Philip's (Metacom's) War was gearing up by the 1660s, following both Massasoit Ousamequin's death in 1661, and his son Massasoit Wamsutta's untimely and suspicious death in 1662. Wamsutta was abducted and ordered to go with Winslow's forces to Josiah Winslow's home in Marshfield. There, Wamsutta was to meet with Plymouth authorities and answer to accusations. Unexpectedly, Wamsutta grew very ill, and despite being given a physic by a local doctor, he was in great discomfort and allowed to go home with a promise of returning. However, the Pokanoket leader grew so ill that he had to be carried by his braves, and died soon after. Natives believe that Wamsutta was poisoned. At that time, 1662, Josiah had been Plymouth Colony's Military Leader for a decade. Needless to say, this event sparked much of the native New England population in adverse circumstances. Wamsutta's younger brother Metacom (known to the English as King Philip) was only 24 years old when his brother died. Taking over the leadership of 60 or more sachemships at such a young age would be a difficult task for any young man.

GOV. JOSIAH WINSLOW'S SON, ISAAC'S 1699 MARSHFIELD HOME



Photo by the Author

Gov. Josiah Winslow's son, Isaac's 1699 Marshfield home, the 3rd house built on Edward Winslow's property called Careswell. Josiah lived in his father Edward's 1640's home, and he added several rooms and renovations. That extended first home is no longer extant, but Isaac Winslow's house remains.

As the mid 1670s approached, tensions between the Indigenous people and the New England Colonists reached a feverish pitch. Josiah Winslow had his property fortified and guarded. He sent his family to Salem, I believe. Colonists feared even the Christianized Natives who lived and studied the Bible, as instructed by Missionary John Elliot and other religious leaders. The Colonists feared their native neighbors (Nipmuc, Massachusetts, and Wampanoag especially) even though they were living in Christianized villages with overseers. Colonists feared they might side with Metacom against the English. As 1676 approached, a decision was made by local authorities to send the 500-1000 Christian Natives by boat up the Charles River and out to the deforested Deer Island and other islands in Boston Harbor. The captives were left there to fend for themselves amid frigid conditions until the war was over. Half of the captives perished. The others were freed after the war ended the following summer.

Judging from the earliest date documented that I have found, (1671), of **Seaflower**, I would assume that Governor Winslow purchased or took over the vessel prior to or during that year. Nathaniel Winslow, Jr. was only 4 years old at the time, but Kenelm Winslow was 71 and sons Nathaniel and Job, 32 and 30 respectively, and we know for certain that Job Winslow was a seasoned shipwright at that time.

Captain Thomas Smith of Boston was master of **Seaflower** until sometime after the war ended in late summer of 1676. I can document that Captain Thomas Smith had command of that vessel from at least 1671 through the end of 1676. Records of vessels docking in Boston, and Certificates from both Governor Winslow of Plymouth Colony and Governor John Leverett of the Bay Colony in Boston, attest to the fact that Captain Thomas Smith had command of **Seaflower** prior to and in the months following the end of "King Philip's War." Governor Winslow and Governor Leverett each gave certificates to Captain Thomas Smith to transport Indian captives to Jamaica on **Seaflower** and to sell the native prisoners there, including kin and allies of Metacom. The Combined 180 prisoners were mostly old or disabled men, women and children; yet they were condemned to serve lives of perpetual servitude. Both certificates provide the name of the Secretary in Jamaica who received them. Captain Smith's voyages that fall of 1676 on **Seaflower** sailed to and were received in Jamaica, according to the certificates.

By the time the war ended and **Seaflower** returned from Jamaica, Nathaniel Winslow Jr. was ten years old. Boston Governor John Leverett died three years later, in March of 1679. Plymouth Governor Josiah Winslow died the following year in 1680 at the age of only 51.

We know that Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr., born 29 July 1667, became Master of the sloop, **Seaflower**. Whether the vessel was left to him by Governor Josiah Winslow, I cannot say for certain, but it appears to have been returned to Kenelm, Sr. and son Nathaniel, Sr's branch of the Winslow family and to have remained with Nathaniel Winslow's son Nathaniel, Jr. for several decades.

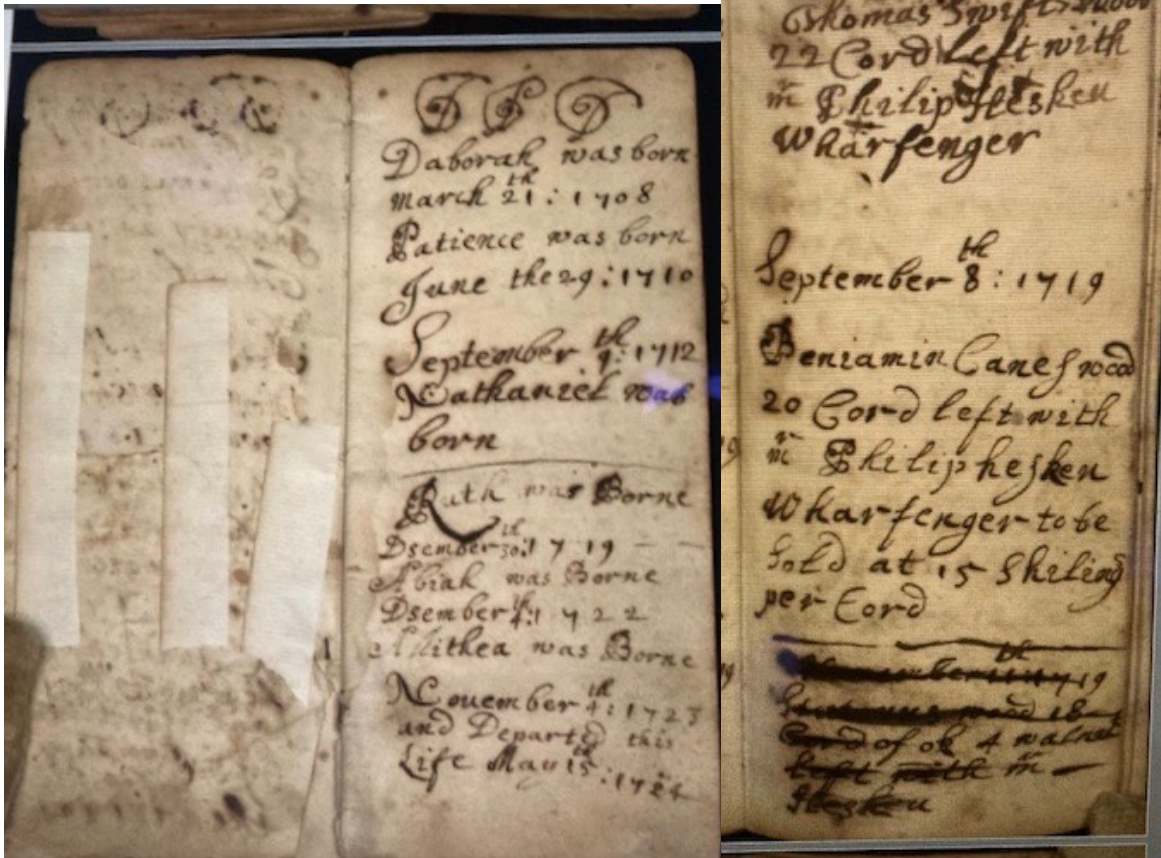
Nathaniel Jr. was given command of **Seaflower** sometime after the war. He used the sloop as a merchant vessel and freighted wood to Boston from Governor Josiah Winslow's property at Careswell Creek. Captain Winslow carried loads of lumber and cords of wood, cut from the forest around Governor Josiah's vast Careswell property in Marshfield. Co-Authors Krusell and Magoun Bates mention that, "*Oak timber was plentiful in that area at the time.*" They wrote, "*There once were great stands of cedars, white oaks, walnuts and chestnuts at Rexhame Hill and along the low-lying land between the south side of the Hill and Green Harbor River.*"

Captain Nathaniel Winslow had a mill in the vicinity of the Careswell Creek. Most likely, it was a pit sawmill with large two-man saw suspended into a pit with one man holding the bottom of the wood-framed saw and another man above, standing on the log, working the saw in an up and down motion along the length of the log, in order to make boards. Throughout his adult life, Captain Winslow's freight on **Seaflower** was logs, boards, perhaps clapboards and shingles and definitely cords of wood. According to an *Account Book* maintained for decades by Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr., in August of 1619, on his way to Boston, he dropped off 22 cords of Thomas Swifts' wood with Wharfinger, Philip Hesken. As you see in his account, the next month he left 20 cords of Benjamin Cane's wood with the same Wharfinger, to be sold at 15 Shillings per cord.

For decades it appears, Captain Nathaniel Winslow kept that same *Account Book* of his logging and mill business. He also used the book to record the names and birth dates of

his children. However, much of the book is illegible, and Captain Nathaniel's first three children with wife Lydia Snow, have been partially removed by whomever cut three strips from the page.

ACCOUNT BOOK PAGES



Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr's Account Book Pages

Winterthur Museum and Library

The *Account Book* covers the period about 1693 to 1729. I wrote to Winterthur Library, which currently holds the *Account Book*, and they sent a pdf of it. The narrow old book appears well worn and is difficult to read for it was written in from both sides and both ends. Obviously, the announcement of each child was written down after each of Nathaniel, Jr.'s 9 children's births, and the death of his last child, Alithea, at 6 months of age. As you can see, Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr. practiced making fancy Capitol Ds in 1708, prior to writing his fourth child's name - Deborah (Daborah). The last three children were born by Captain Nathaniel's second wife, Deborah Barstow, as Lydia died in 1716, and Nathaniel married Deborah the following year, on 17 February 1717.

Notice on Nathaniel's "*List of Birthdays*," that Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr's 6th child, born 9 September 1712, was named NATHANIEL. I bet that little Nathaniel Winslow, 3rd, sailed with his father on **Seaflower**. Perhaps son Oliver did too. Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr. died in 1736 at the age of 69, in Marshfield.

I thought I might end this article with Captain Nathaniel, Jr. leaving a record of his newborn son, Nathaniel III, but...

But, no! Governor, Craig Faylor sent me an **Index of Obituaries for 1704 to 1800**. The Index reports that the first Captain Nathaniel Winslow, (Kenelm's son) dropped dead in Marshfield at 80 years old on 1 December 1719. Later, I noticed *another* Captain Nathaniel Winslow on that same Index. He was "of Boston," and died" on his passage from the West Indies, 18 August 1763." I thought about it for some time, and wondered if this Captain Nathaniel could be Captain Nathaniel Winslow III, the son of Captain Nathaniel Winslow, Jr, who kept an Account Book for decades for his orders on *Seaflower*. Certainly, there were several generations of Captain Nathaniel Winslows.

A library record I received mentioned a logbook of Robert Treat Paine, covering a whaling voyage to Greenland, May 6 through 25 August 1754, "**in the Sloop *Seaflower***." I have read those sturdy wooden vessels, maintained in good condition, could last 100 years or more, and from my research for our book **Connecticut River Shipbuilding**, I learned that older vessels often spent their final years at sea as whalers, so it is possible that this was a final voyage of our ***Seaflower***.

Seaflower may have been the first significant vessel built and docked in Marshfield. Certainly, she is a significant early Marshfield sailing vessel, if not the first! The sturdy sloop was probably built by Kenelm and Job Winslow and used by Winslows from both Edward's and Kenelm's families prior to and during" King Philip's War," and for decades after as a merchant ship carrying wood to Boston from Marshfield.

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Pilgrim Hall Museum - Beyond the Pilgrim Story - John & Sarah Jenny

Master Shipwright, Paul Kilpin's e-mail of 3 July 2020, regarding the Artistry of Joiners.

Personal experiences and conversations with shipwrights while working at Gannon & Benjamin Boat Yard, Vineyard Haven, MA.

Research of Ancestors who were ship masters and ship, fort and home builders

Conversations and relationships with present day Pokanoket and Wampanoag Indian Leaders

Extensive Research on the 17th Century Sloop *Seaflower* and our Captain Nathaniel Winslows through Kenelm