

Stanstead Abbotts' Contribution to the New World

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In April 1635, the “Hopewell,” a ship moored at the docks in London, took on 66 passengers bound for Massachusetts Bay in America, some three thousand miles away. A number of them were from Stanstead Abbotts. Who were they, why were they going and what happened to them when they arrived and settled in what was then a British colony, over a hundred years before it became an independent nation? Our main source of information is the passenger list drawn up by an unknown scribe, who as we shall see, was not particularly competent or careful, so there is considerable room for doubt over some of the details he has given.

The “Great Migration”

However, answering the second question first:- why were they going? They were part of what became known as “**the Great Migration**”. During the ten years from 1630 to 1640, a staggering total of around 20,000 people left for the New World, church ministers and their church members, sometimes complete congregations, and even complete villages. A total of seventy-seven ministers and fourteen trainees were among the emigrants. They were all leaving everything they owned, which in many cases may not have been much, selling what they could to pay the fare, and heading for an unknown and very uncertain future. As suggested by the large number of clergy and clergy in training, their reasons had to do with religious belief and freedom.¹

The Church of England, which broke from the Roman Catholic Church in the reign of Henry VIII, initially over Henry’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon, settled down under his daughter Elizabeth I to be a good British middle-of-the-road compromise between Roman ideas and practices and the more radical and thorough-going reforms such as those introduced by John Calvin in Geneva. Several of the British religious leaders had sheltered on the Continent during

¹There is a nineteenth century work with the marvellous title: *The original lists of persons of quality; emigrants; religious exiles; political rebels; serving men sold for a term of years; apprentices; children stolen; maidens pressed; and others who went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700 by John Camden Hotten with their ages, the localities where they formerly lived in the mother country and the names of the ships in which they embarked, and other interesting particulars; from mss. preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office, England. Published 1874 by Hotten in London*. “Political rebels” and many of those following were sent to Barbados following the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685. Who were the “maidens pressed”, one wonders! Perhaps this quote from the Web gives an answer: “The role of women in the early colonies was vital to the survival of the colonies. There was a shortage of women in the early southern colonies (I.e. Virginia and the southern states), and young women were actively recruited in England. They were given free passage and a trousseau, once they were married their husbands had to repay the [Virginia] company with 120 pounds of good leaf tobacco”. There did not seem to be the same shortage further north, in New England where families, not just men, emigrated.

the short reign of Mary, Henry's older daughter, who was a devout Catholic. When they returned to England during the early years of Elizabeth's reign, they wanted to follow the Continental Reformers in abolishing bishops and introducing a more representative method of church government. They also wanted to get rid of the Anglican prayer book, which they felt was still too much influenced by Roman ideas. And finally they argued for a stricter application of Christian values in the lives of clergy and indeed all professing Christians. Their desire to purify the Church, its worship and life, earned for them the name of "Puritan".

The bishops under Elizabeth, and also her successor James I, resisted these ideas. In the reign of Charles I, James's son, things became worse for those desiring reform. Even under James, there were those who, impatient with the way things were, separated altogether from the Anglican Church (and were known as "Brownists" after one of their leaders, or "Separatists"). In 1620 a number of them from Scrooby in Nottinghamshire, had emigrated to America in the "Mayflower", settling south of Boston in a place they named as Plymouth, after the port from which they had sailed.

With the accession of Charles I to the throne in 1625, the situation for Puritan clergy and their followers became increasingly difficult, and ultimately impossible. Charles's insistence on the Divine Right of Monarchy, his marriage to a Catholic princess, his rule without parliament from 1629 onwards which made it impossible to challenge his will, and the increasing influence of William Laud (1573-1645), first as Bishop of Bath and Wells, then Bishop of London and finally as Archbishop of Canterbury, left many Puritans with no alternative but to emigrate. Laud was extremely anti-Puritan in his beliefs and practices and he wielded the power to make them conform or get out.

In 1629 Charles I granted a charter to the Massachusetts Bay Company establishing a legal basis for the new English colony. It was not apparent that Charles knew the Company was meant to support the Puritan emigration, and he was probably left to assume it was purely for business purposes, as was the custom. However, it cleared the way for Puritan sympathisers of all classes, from landowners to the ordinary husbandmen and tenant farmers, and clergy of course, to emigrate to a new land where they could establish settlements and churches formed under their own principles. The first flotilla of ships carrying 700 passengers arrived in 1630 and was followed by many more, for the next ten years at least.

Among ministers with some local connection, we know of three: Samuel Stone who was born in Hertford and founded Hartford, Connecticut in 1636 (his statue stands outside Castle Hall in Hertford), Charles Chauncy, a vicar of St Mary's Church, Ware, who was appointed the first president of Harvard College in 1654, and John Eliot, born in Widford and growing up in Nazeing, who became a missionary in 1646 to the Indians near the town of Roxbury in Massachusetts where he was the minister.

Essex, together with Norfolk, Suffolk and Lincolnshire were all important Puritan locations from where large-scale emigration took place over the period, including "a sweep of villages on the

western border of Hertfordshire, from John Eliot's Nazeing through Hatfield Broad Oak to Saffron Walden" (Roger Thompson *Mobility and Migration: East Anglian Founders of New England 1629-1640*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1994 p 20.) Bishops Stortford, just across the county border, was also included. The Rev John Norton, who was one of the most influential ministers in New England, becoming in 1656 the minister of the First Church in Boston, came from there.

However, we do not know of any Puritan activity in Stanstead Abbots, to which we now turn - apart from those who sailed in the "Hopewell". Coincidentally, it was in 1635, the year they set sail, that Sir Edward Baesh founded a free grammar school for the sons (not daughters!!) of inhabitants of the village, the Clock House which still stands at the eastern end of the High Street. It is reckoned that only 30% of the English population could read or write in the early part of the seventeenth century, more in the towns, fewer in rural areas. Stanstead Abbots and the surrounding area would have very few people who were literate, so the Baesh school met a real need.

The Stanstead Abbots connection

Two years before the "Hopewell" sailed for New England, a Stanstead Abbots man had already made the long voyage and had settled at Roxbury. This has only recently come to light and is recorded in R Thompson's *Mobility and Migration* (University of Massachusetts Press 1994) p 130. His name was **John Graves**, whose family had roots in the village from 1525 and he himself had in all probability been born here. He actually worked in Nazeing, five miles away (we do not know his occupation) and presumably lived there, so it was from there that he emigrated. In the Roxbury Church membership list he is said to have been from Nazeing, but it was not where he originally came from! His wife accompanied him but died within the first few years, and he remarried. He died on November 4, 1644 and in the Church Book the pastor John Eliot, himself originally from Nazeing, calls him a "godly brother of the church" and says of him and Thomas Ruggles that "these two broke the knot first of the Nazing Christians. I mean they first died of all those Christians that came from that town in England."

The following were registered on the "Hopewell" list as "from Stanstede Abbey in com Hert."

Laurence Whittimor 63 Husbandman

Elizabeth Whittimor 57

Elizabeth Turner 26

Sara Elliott 6

Robert Day 30

Wm. Peacock 12

We know that Sara Elliott was actually a member of the group from Nazeing who were registered next on the list. She was a daughter of Elizabeth Elliott who was there with her three daughters, and possibly her husband Philip. It suggests that the scribe was none too careful or accurate, for whatever reason. The list of passengers should have included the name, age and occupation of each person, where they were resident and the fact that they had the necessary

certification from their local minister and justice of the peace concerning their loyalty to the king and the Church of England. The full details were supplied for very few of the 66 passengers on the “Hopewell.”

“Stanstede Abbey” is obviously an error for Stanstead Abbots. No Stanstead Abbey has ever existed. Maybe the scribe had hearing problems as well!!²

Laurence Whittemore (various spellings abound for all names at the time. Apparently William Shakespeare spelt his own name in a number of ways, even in the same document!)

Laurence was born around 1572, possibly in Stanstead Abbots. (Before the advent of officially required registration of births, marriages and deaths in the 19th century, many people had only a vague idea of where and precisely when they were born.)

He was married at Great Amwell, on 25 February 1627/8, to **Elizabeth** Adams, a widow (possibly she was the Elizabeth Foredome [Fordham] first married to John Adams at Ware on 21 July 1610. Adams must have died subsequently). No children are recorded from either marriage.

Laurence was a husbandman, that is “a man who tills or cultivates the ground; a farmer” (OED). We do not know if he owned a piece of his own land or was a tenant. He must have had some possessions to be able to sell them to pay for his and his wife’s passage to New England. They must obviously encountered and embraced Puritan ideas at some point, and felt it was worth joining the great exodus to make a fresh start, in spite of their age. Laurence was 63 and Elizabeth was 57 when they embarked on the “Hopewell” and embarked also on this new start in their lives. (In the seventeenth century, the average expected life span was around 35 to 40. However this was influenced by the high infant and childhood mortality rate. If someone survived into adulthood, they could expect to live into their 50s or 60s. Some lived longer.)

Stanstead Abbots was only about five miles from Nazeing, where there were a considerable number of Puritan sympathisers. (There were at least ten on the “Hopewell” and more made the journey both before and after them). In fact, back in Nazeing they probably had a “conventicle” (an unofficial meeting in a private home, where they prayed together, read the Bible and engaged in “religious conversation”, while at the same time continuing to attend the parish church.)

Even if Laurence did not already know them, on the long voyage to New England he would obviously have talked with these folk from Nazeing, who would have told him that they were heading for Roxbury, west from Boston, where John Eliot, Philip’s brother, was the minister.

²On the other hand, there may be another reason for this variation. See the Appended Note at the end. See also the discussion on <http://www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk/data/places/places-s/stanstead-abbots/!-stanstead-abbots-frame.htm> where Chris Reynolds, who runs the site, comes to a similar conclusion.

Laurence and his wife decided to join them and spent the rest of their lives in Roxbury He was made a Freeman in April 1637. He was a member of the church, although Elizabeth was probably not. She died first; the record in the Church Book gives the following account:

“On 13 Feb 1642/3, at Roxbury, "[Elizabeth] Whattamore, the wife of Laurenc[e], she died of apoplexy, which she had more than two years before, but it resolved into a palsy in all her left side, being void of sense & motion, but was cured of it again, though she were about 60 years of age.””

Laurence followed her the next year, “On 18 Nov 1644 died Laurence Whittamore, an ancient Christian of 80 years of age” (He was actually nearer 72). A note in the history of the Roxbury Church records, “As he had no children, he gave his estate to the Free Schoole.”³

We know almost nothing of **Elizabeth Turner** who was 26 years old when she sailed for America (although some records say she was aged 20. It is unlikely that she was a “maiden pressed”! (See Footnote 1) One American family website (of which there are vast numbers, all claiming descent from the early settlers), says that she **may** have been married to a John Luther (1610-1644) soon after she arrived from England and had two sons by him. However we do not know where they settled in New England.

Regarding **Robert Day** we have far more information.

He was probably born in Stanstead Abbots in 1604 or 1605 and was a brickmaker by trade. He moved almost immediately to the new settlement of Ipswich, Massachusetts, thirty miles north east of Boston, where he married a girl who arrived in that year, Hannah Pengry, who was born

³ This was the so-called Latin School set up by John Eliot. According to the school's website: “ The Roxbury Latin School was founded in 1645, in the reign of King Charles I, by John Eliot, a church teacher, and later renowned as Apostle to the Indians and translator of the Bible into the Algonquin language. Eliot's vision was “to fit [students] for public service both in church and commonwealth....”

“Modeled on the English grammar school, the School was dedicated to giving instruction in the classics and producing Christian citizens. The goal of Christian citizenship was to be pursued by three means: an education in [Latin] literature, training in moral character, and lessons in religious or spiritual understanding. Eliot persuaded nearly every Roxbury landowner to underwrite the School's costs. The first year, fewer than ten students attended, including Eliot's own nine-year-old son.

“Younger boys studied preparatory subjects — reading, writing, and arithmetic — while older students moved on to Latin grammar, a prerequisite for entrance to Harvard, the Massachusetts Bay colony's only college. The School was open to all who wished to attend. Subsequently, Eliot convinced those founding families to defray tuition for students whose families could not afford donations, and later, the trustees granted free admission to all applicants from Roxbury.”

Eliot must have been planning the school for some time and had already started to get financial support from his congregation in 1644, when Laurence died. The school still exists today and is the earliest to have survived to the present time.

in 1612 and came from Ipswich in Suffolk. They had a total of five children.

The official website of the town gives the following detail:

“The town of Ipswich was founded on land that was originally inhabited by Native American tribes, who called the area "Agawam." Agawam was colonized in 1633, when a group led by John Winthrop Jr. established Ipswich, a settlement named for a town in England from which most of the first settlers originated. The banks of the Ipswich River provided an ideal location for establishing a new community. The settlers enjoyed the advantages of fresh water, waterpower, excellent fishing, and transportation.

“The small settlement quickly prospered and by 1646 Ipswich had nearly 800 inhabitants. The early residents of Ipswich were farmers, fishermen, shipbuilders, and traders. By the mid-1700s bridges criss-crossed the Ipswich River, wharfs and storehouses aligned the shore of the navigable water, and a salt works, tannery and ship building yard were in operation. Fishing was the most profitable industry on the river. Ships from the West Indies unloaded molasses at the wharf. The barrels were rolled directly into a thriving distillery, the town's second largest commercial operation in Ipswich.”

Robert was an active member of town affairs; according to the Day Genealogy website:

“He was made a freeman on May 6, 1635. He served on the Ipswich petit jury in 1642, 1653, 1655, and 1659 and on the Grand Jury in 1651, 1656, and 1672. He was an Ipswich Selectman in 1658, a Constable in 1660, and a Tythingman in 1678. On March 28, 1654, Robert Day was released from training with the Militia providing he paid 6s. a year to the company.”

On the other hand, “In 1648 Robert was listed as having owed 2 shillings for Ipswich’s yearly tax.” He was late in paying his Council Tax!

There is a further fact of interest in that Robert was one of the signatories of a petition to “remove and suppress one of the ordinaries found to be many ways prejudicial to the good of the place...and no longer to continue or grant any license for upholding and keeping the same ordinary. Which we verily believe will be an effectual means for the removing of much sin and will [illegible] and minister cause of joy and thanksgiving to many of God’s people amongst us.”

An “ordinary” was a tavern or public house, and Robert and his fellow-petitioners wanted it to be permanently closed down. Just as well he did not live in Stanstead Abbots with its ten pubs in the nineteenth century! On the other hand, it is “**one** of the ordinaries”, so presumably there were others of which they approved! Would he have approved of all the present Stanstead Abbots ones?!

What do we know about **William Peacock** aged 12? Presumably not a “child stolen”! (See

footnote 1). Was he unaccompanied? Who paid his fare? What did he plan to do when he arrived? A bit of a mystery.

A Robert Peacock, a glazier, and his wife Jane went to live in Roxbury and he was made a Freeman in 1639. They had two children when they were in Roxbury. Later they moved to Boston, where his wife died in 1653. He remarried a year later to a Margery Shove. He joined the church in Boston in 1665.

Robert and Jane **could** have been William's parents but we do not know where they lived in England before emigrating, nor the date they left for the New World. If they were his parents, they sent him ahead (or after) them and presumably were reunited soon after. We do not know if they asked the Whittimores or anyone else from Stanstead Abbots to look after him on the voyage. So much of this is, admittedly, speculation with so little hard evidence at this distance in time.

William turned up in Roxbury in 1652 and married Mary Willis in 1654, but they did not become members of the church there. They had three sons.

The list grows!

In the shipping list of the "Hopewell", immediately preceding the "Stanstede Abbey" group, there are four names:

Joh: Astwood 26 Husbandman

Jo: Ruggells 10

Martha Carter 27

Marie Elliott 13

Jo Ruggells and Marie Elliott were actually members of the group from Nazeing, which appears after the Stanstede Abbey names, as other members of both the Ruggells and Elliott families are listed there.

However, **Joh: Astwood** and **Martha Carter** were both probably from Stanstead Abbots! In the membership list of the First Church of Roxbury they appear as:

"JOHN ASTWOOD, husbandman from Stanstead Abbey, Co. Herts, Eng., came to Roxbury in 1635, aged, 26 with wife Martha. Freeman March 3 1635/6. Removed to Milford.

MARTHA ASTWOOD, wife of John Astwood."

On the list of passengers Martha appears under her maiden name, but soon after they arrived in Boston and move on to Roxbury she was Mrs Astwood! When did they get married and what was behind this? According to one account, John had married a girl from Little Hadham, Dinis Stallworth, in February 1634. She had died on December 26 soon after the birth of a child. Perhaps the opportunity to go to America came too quickly for John and Martha to get married

first, so soon after the death of John's first wife. Consequently they asked the Master William Bundick (or Bundock) to marry them on the voyage, or they may have got married once they landed in New England. Anyway, they settled in Roxbury and a daughter Hannah was born there.

In 1637, John moved south-west to Connecticut to New Haven and then in 1639 was one of the founding members of the church and community in Milford a few miles further south-west. Martha died, either while they were still in Roxbury or soon after the move, and in the early 1640s John married a widow, Sarah Baldwin. Sadly his first two wives both died either in childbirth or soon after - a not uncommon occurrence in those days. What happened with the children of the marriages we do not know. Sarah, his third wife, did not have any children.

John was deeply involved in the life of Milford and New Haven. He served in various public offices and was elected as a Commissioner of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in New England, the society which supported John Eliot in his missionary work among the Indians, and also a Commissioner of the United Colonies. Probably in the latter capacity he visited England in 1654 and died there. So at least one local resident from our village achieved a reasonably high office in the American colonies!

His brother **James Astwood and his wife Sarah** also came to New England in 1638, settling first in Roxbury and later moving to Boston, where they became members of a new church. There is no mention of James coming from Stanstead Abbots but we do not know.

Our anonymous and much-maligned (by me!) scribe then lists the last group who were registered on April 3rd:

“Of St. Katherins

Robert Titus 35 Husbandman

Hanna Titus 21 uxor [Latin for “wife”]

Jo: Titus 8

Edmond Titus 5 “

The question arises: Which St Katherins?

There were three churches and parishes in London with this name, St Katherine Coleman and St Katherine Cree, both within the City boundaries, and also St Katherines by the Tower. It is unlikely that either of the first two would be the one referred to without the addition of “Coleman” or “Cree”. The third is to the east of the Tower of London and outside the city wall. It was a “royal peculiar” which means that it was founded by Queen Matilda, the wife of Stephen in AD 1148, and as such had certain privileges. Significantly for us, it is on the riverside, and it might have been that the “Hopewell” was moored at St Katherines Dock.

But...where would a husbandman have worked in any of these three London parishes? Husbandmen worked in the countryside, well away from the city. It is not too much to say that it is impossible that **Robert Titus** lived in London if he worked as a husbandman, tilling and

cultivating the soil.

For some reason our scribe has omitted the place Robert and his family lived before coming to London to board the ship, and possibly has substituted the place where the ship was moored and where perhaps they had stayed for a short time to get their documentation in order before boarding.

So where had he lived and worked before coming to London? We have already mentioned the host of American family websites dedicated to proving that their ancestors were among the early settlers. Many of these are unreliable and the fact that the same facts are repeated from one site to another does not render them any more reliable. Repeating the same error many times does not make it true!

However, in the case of Robert Titus, the case is different. One of his descendants was the Rev Anson Titus Jr (1847-1932), a reputable genealogist, historian and antiquary, who produced a short eight page history of the first three generations of his family in America. It is he who mentions Stanstead Abbots as the birthplace of Robert Titus:

“ROBERT TITUS, the first of the name in America, was born in England in 1600, probably St. Catherine's parish, near Stansted Abbots, Hertfordshire, some thirty miles north of London. There is a probability that Robert was of the same family of Col. Silas Titus who played quite a part in the politics of his time.” (page 1) Rev Anson Titus Jr "Titus Family in America", New York Genealogical & Biographical Record, Vol XII, New York, Jan. 1881.

He then goes on to cite the passenger list we have been referring to repeatedly and is probably one of the first to do this:

“ROBERT TITUS embarked from London April 3, 1635. The following is the entry in the passenger list, preserved in the Public Record Office, London. "Theis under written names are to be transported to New England, imbarqued in ye" Hopewell, Mr. Wm. Bundick. The p'ties have brought certificate from the Minister & justices of Peace that they are no Subsedy men, they have taken the oath of Alleg. & Supremacie, ROBERT TITUS, Husbandman of St. Katherin's, (aged) 35
HANNAH TITUS, uxor 3 1
Jo. TITUS 8
EDMOND TITUS 5"

He then gives a brief summary of the life of Robert and his family after they landed:

“They arrived at Boston in a few weeks following, and soon were granted land in the present town of Brookline, near Muddy River, adjoining Boston. Here the family remained two or three years, when they removed to the town of Weymouth, some nine miles to the southeast. Their land is described in the records of the town of Weymouth, and was located in the present village of North Weymouth, and is not far from the unfortunate settlement which Capt. Weston made in Sept, 1622. In the spring of 1644

Robert, in company with some forty families, removed with the minister of the Weymouth parish, Rev. Samuel Newman, to the town of Rehoboth, just east of Providence, R. I. He was one of the founders of the first parish. While a resident of Rehoboth he was often entrusted by the freemen with offices of confidence. He was Commissioner for the Court of Plymouth from Rehoboth the years 1648-9, and 1650 and 1654. He had some trouble with the authorities because he harbored Abney Ordway and family, they being of "evil fame," which, the author supposes, means they were Quakers. He soon after gave notice of his intention to leave the colony. He sold his property to Robert Jones, of Nantasket, 23d 3d mo., 1654, and we fix this as about the date of his migration to Long Island."

This sounds as if he went voluntarily, but there is no doubt that he was told to go, in spite of his importance in the community! There was no more toleration of differences in New England than there was in old England!

They had four more children in America. Robert died in about 1670 and Hannah in 1679. Edmond became a Quaker, "for which he suffered many things at the hands of the authorities." He died at the age of 85.

It is Anson Titus who mentions Stanstead Abbotts. He had visited England, so may even have come to the village. He tries hard to make sense of the "St Katherins" reference but there was no such parish in the seventeenth century (St Catherine and St Paul's Church in Hoddesdon was only established in 1732.) Where did he hear or read of our village as being Robert's birthplace? I can only assume that there was some oral tradition in the Titus family which was passed down for a number of generations. The "Stanstede Abbey" reference in the passenger list was far too remote from their names for him to confuse it.

So it remains a distinct possibility that yet another early inhabitant of New England (a family of four in this case) came from our village!

Conclusion

With a couple of exceptions, the people we have looked at were not high profile members of their communities, unlike the Nazeing contingent, from whom came the Roxbury minister, John Eliot, one of the ruling elders Isaac Heath, two of the deacons Philip Eliot (John's elder brother) and Giles Payson, and several of the most prominent members, such as the Ruggles family who, like Payson and Philip Eliot and his family, were on the "Hopewell". However that does not mean that they did not make their own contribution to their communities nor did it make them any less valuable as people. We honour them for having the courage of their convictions, which meant that they were willing to leave whatever comfort and security they had (which may not have been much for at least some of them) to travel by comparatively tiny, vulnerable sailing ship (not ocean liner or jumbo jet) across three thousand miles of ocean to a challenging and very uncertain future.

Appended Note
Abbey v Abbotts

Let's look once more at the fact that Stanstead Abbotts is referred to in the various records we have been studying as "Stanstead Abbey" or "Stanstede Abbey".

1. As we have seen, the "Hopewell" passenger list gives "**Stanstede Abbey**" for the Whittamores.

2. The Roxbury Church list of members gives "**Stanstead Abbey, Co Herts**" for both the Whittamores and the Astwoods. There is no reference to the "Hopewell" and the spelling of "Stanstead" is different, so there is no likelihood of dependence on the passenger list. Both couples must have verbally given the name of their home village to a church official as "Stanstead Abbey".

3. Regarding John Astwood, two references on the same page of a record of *Colonial Families of Long Island, New York & Connecticut*, page 231 by H F Seversmith, give firstly for John that he was born in 1609 at **Stansted Abbots**, Herefordshire (!!), England, and then for Sarah that "she married, in 1640 to John Astwood of **Stanstead Abbey**, Hertfordshire, born in 1609, died in 1653; he was an immigrant on the Hopewell, and at Milford, Connecticut in 1639."

4. *The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660* Pg 132, has the note: "1-6 Apr 1635 Passengers embarked from London in the Hopewell of London, bound for New England: Robert Day 30 and William Peacock 12 from **Stansted Abbey**, Herts"

5. Rev Anson Titus Jr "*Titus Family in America*", New York Genealogical & Biographical Record, gives "near" **Stansted Abbots** as Robert Titus's birthplace.

6. Chris Reynolds on the Herts Geneological website (see note 2) has found three references from the eighteenth century where the village is referred to as **Stanstead Abbey**, very few indeed compared with all the other references to **Stanstead Abbot** or **Stanstead Abbots** or **Stanstead Abbotts**. But it does show that there is some evidence for the **abbey** references which we have looked at.

So "You pays your money and you takes your choice"!!

Chris also suggests that a person hearing **Stanstead Abbot(s)** and not knowing the area nor being familiar with the Hertfordshire accent could very well have written **Stanstead Abbey**. This may have been true of the "Hopewell" scribe, as well as the recorder of members at Roxbury. The error could then have been repeated by others as in 3. and 4. above.

It occurs to me that even some inhabitants of the village itself might have called it **Stanstead Abbey!** In view of the estimates of literacy in the seventeenth century (see above), probably only

one in four would have been able to read or write. Laurence Whittamore and John Astwood were both husbandmen and so were probably non-literate. Having only ever **heard** the name of the village spoken quickly by someone with a strong Hertfordshire accent (dropping the “s” at the end and substituting a glottal stop for the “t”), it might have registered with them as **Stanstead Abbey**, and they could have grown up thinking this was truly the name. They would have heard of Waltham Abbey, and probably Westminster Abbey or St Albans Abbey, and assumed it was the same word, and this is what they gave as their place of origin. Just a thought!!