

Tuesday's Tip: The Griffin Family Coin and Family History



1881 Morgan silver dollar engraved with birthdates of the Griffin family. It has a pinback, and was purchased on eBay many years ago. (Click to enlarge.)

Tuesday's Tip: Look *everywhere* for family history information.

On this Valentine's Day, it is fitting to feature this wonderful "love token" on the blog.

No, we are not related to the Griffin family, but it would be nice to find someone who is a descendant.

So, what is a "love token"?

During the late 1700s, through the 1800s and even up through

World War II, coins were sometimes used as an inexpensive and personal form of memento, jewelry, or good luck token. One or both sides of the coin would be filed or sanded down and rubbed smooth. Designs, words, names, initials, would then be hand-carved into the soft metal of the coin. Sometimes areas were cut out of the coin, enamel or raised metals would be added, or it might be cut into a shape other than round. The finished token might be gold-plated, or more rarely, a gold coin was actually used for the token.

These engraved coins are often called "love tokens," as a sweetheart might make and give a special coin to celebrate a wedding, anniversary, special event, or just their love. Coins were engraved by soldiers in bunkers ("trench art"), by farmers during a cold and dark winter, by factory workers in the evening after many long hours at work, or at fairs and expositions. Examples of this art might sport very simple or even crude engravings, some punched with a nail or sharp object, or very fine, elegant art cut by a professional engraver. A pinback could be added, and sometimes more than one coin would be made into a brooch. The coins could also be made into a bracelet (love token bracelets were quite the rage at various times), or added to a watch fob; less often were the coins made into pendants to wear as a necklace. A gentleman might even keep one of these special coins in his pocket, for good luck, or wear it as a stickpin. Engraved coins were given not just to sweethearts, either- other family members might receive a personally engraved coin, with initials or the relationship, such as "Mother," or one might be a remembrance of a special trip. Love tokens were used in other countries as well as the United States, and may be found on the coins of various countries.



The above coin is an 1881 Morgan silver dollar, one of the most popular coins ever made because of its beauty. One side of the coin was filed down, lines drawn across and a branch of

leaves added along both the right and left curves of the coin. The top of the coin has the word "Born" and then names and birthdates were added. The bottom center appears to have the date 1901 with a small design on either side.

Transcription:

Born

T. Griffin	Mar. 25 185?
B. "	Apr. 19th 1859
R. "	Mar. 23rd 1881
M. "	Apr. 22nd 1883
E. "	July 15th 1885
A. "	Nov. 7th 1887
G. "	June 15th 1890
L. "	June 10th 1893
C. "	Jan. 23rd 1896
H. "	Aug. 29th 18??



Reverse of 1881 Morgan silver dollar engraved with birthdates of the Griffin family. It has a pinback, and was purchased on eBay many years ago. (Click to enlarge.)

My hypothesis is that this coin was a gift from T. Griffin to his wife, B. ___ Griffin, and it listed the births of their children. If both husband and wife were born in 1859, they would have been about 22 years old in 1881. Their marriage was likely around 1880, estimated from the birth of their first child.

Perhaps the silver dollar was a gift to the wife at the birth of their oldest child in 1881. (Do people still collect coins from the birth year of their child? It was common at least 20 years ago.) Then, twenty years later, in 1901- perhaps as a 20th anniversary gift, or even a Valentine present?- the saved coin was engraved and lovingly given to the mother of eight. She would have worn it proudly, especially since the “worth” of a woman back then was highly correlated to the number of children she could bear.

Please note that the above is just a possible description of the background of this love token- we have no proof for any of it. It has been challenging to learn more about this family, especially since only initials are used for first names, and “Griffin” is a fairly common name. Since the coin was sold on eBay, we may never know how many times it changed hands or travelled to another town.

Our hope is that someone researching the Griffin family name will find this post, and compare the engraved information to known family members. If any of our readers know more about this family, or have suggestions for finding them, please contact us at the blog!

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Coin owned by author.
2. “Darling, Can You Spare a Dime? How Victorians Fell in Love With Pocket Change”–
<http://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/how-victorians-fell-in-love-with-pocket-change/>

3. "What are Love Tokens?" by the Love Token Society– <http://lovetokensociety.com/history/love-tokens/>
4. Of course, coin collectors are horrified at the defacing of coins for love tokens, and there are some coins that would have been worth quite a bit of money had they not been engraved with an image or words. Love tokens are, however, a delightful reminder of our past. They would have been cherished by their owners and proudly worn, and some, such as this coin, can even tell a family story.

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Tuesday's Tip: Context- The 1888 Presidential Election

They have carried politics into the shirt shops and it is said some very hot and able discussions take place each day on the tariff and other issues of the campaign. The democratic and republican garment stitchers have got the political fever and on Friday evening of this week the republican ladies of the Wachuset Shirt factory will have a grand flag raising, after which there will be a rally in town hall. It is said that the ladies of this factory will unfurl one of the finest flags in town, bearing the names of Harrison and Martin.

Leominster, Massachusetts Politics during the 1888 Presidential Election. "Fitchburg Sentinel," Fitchburg, Massachusetts, 18 October 1888, page 2, column 3.

[McMurray Family](#), [Payne Family](#), [Springsteen Family](#) (Click for Family Trees)

Tuesday's Tip:

Look for the context of your ancestor's life-
from politics to clothing,

from community happenings to the style of their house.

Thankfully most family historians have moved away from being collectors of names and dates, and now want to tell the stories of their ancestors lives. Without detailed daily diaries or bundles of old letters, how do we learn about their

lives? Newspapers are a great way to learn what was happening in a community, and an ancestor might be mentioned in a story or obituary. Also, browsing the pages around where one finds an ancestor article can help us to fill in the blanks about the little things in their lives- or even the big things.

Politics can be messy, as we all have experienced these last two years of this what seems to be a never-ending election. (In Great Britain, they only have a certain number of WEEKS they are allowed to campaign- that seems much more sensible.) Elections in our country's history have been just as bad, maybe even worse than this one, but learning about them will help us to understand our ancestors a bit more.

Edward B. Payne (1847-1923) and his wife, Nanie M. (Burnell) Payne (1847-1898), lived in Leominster, Massachusetts in 1888, the year of this article. Their only child, Lynette Payne (who later married William Elmer McMurray), was about to turn nine years old just eight days after this article was published. Rev. Payne was the pastor of the First Congregational Unitarian Church in Leominster. Further down this newspaper column about Leominster happenings was a report of the Porter-Davis wedding at which he officiated, but a few moments of browsing the paper turned up this nugget of context.

In 1888, the Democratic incumbent President, Grover Cleveland, desired a second term. The Republican nominee was Benjamin Harrison, and US tariffs were the biggest issue of the campaign. Tariffs are a tax on imported goods, paid by the importer, and until the Federal Income Tax began in 1913, tariffs were the main source of federal income- up to 95% of the total at times.



1888 Presidential Election- Tariff Reform poster for Grover Cleveland, via Wikipedia; public domain.

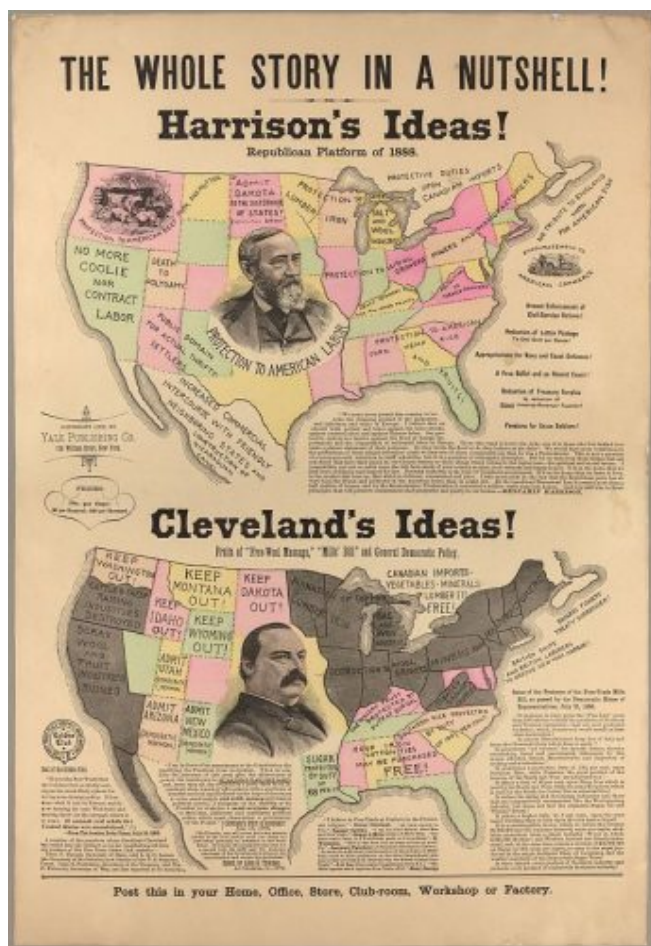
Since high tariffs, paid by foreign manufacturers and importers, provided income to our federal government, they reduced the need for taxes to be paid by our citizens. Sounds good- make the other country pay, right? Well, the bad part is that U.S. tariffs make the cost of imported goods higher to the consumer in *this* country- the cost just gets passed through to the buyer, of course.

Tariffs that are high make domestic products more affordable than imports, and thus more desirable. Therefore those in U.S. industries, including factory workers, preferred high tariffs so that their own production had a lower comparative cost, and they could sell more. Our own citizens would be in high demand as workers, too.

Since the country was prospering and there were no wars going on in 1888, tariffs became THE issue. Grover Cleveland was adamant that high U.S. tariffs were hurting the consumer. He knew that our citizens felt it every time that they bought an imported item, and it hurt their pocketbook. Cleveland thus proposed a large tariff reduction to Congress.

(But then would personal taxes go up? The money has to come from somewhere...)

Harrison, however, felt that high tariffs protected our workers and manufacturers.



Grover Cleveland-Benjamin Harrison presidential (1888) campaign poster about the trade policy of the two candidates. The map supports the work of the Harrison campaign. via Wikipedia, public domain.

Benjamin Harrison was a Republican from Indiana, and he gave speeches from his front porch in Indianapolis- our Springsteen ancestors, such as Jefferson Springsteen and his son Abram Furman Springsteen, may have been a part of those crowds. The Springsteens were Democrats, so may have been part of the hecklers, although they may have had divided loyalties. Their party's man, President Cleveland, was against military pensions. Since Jeff had at least 2 sons who had served in the Civil War, one of which was Abram, the Springsteens may not have been so happy with Cleveland, either.

Back in Leominster, Massachusetts, where Edward B. Payne and family were living, the factory workers, as expected, were supporting Harrison with his views of keeping tariffs high. It is interesting that the shirt factory ladies were going to "unfurl one of the finest flags in town, bearing the names of Harrison and Morton." (Morton was the V.P. nominee.) Since women in most states could not legally vote in a Presidential election until 32 years later, it was one small way they could voice their political opinions and help influence the outcome.

Rev. Payne was a Christian Socialist in his later years, and surely, with his devotion to the poor, he exemplified that philosophy even earlier in life. He most likely would have favored a candidate who had the middle and lower classes in mind. (Later in California, he registered as a Socialist; we have found no other documentation of his political leanings.) He worked quite a lot with factory workers though, so he too may have had a difficult time deciding between candidates when he was ready to cast his ballot in the Cleveland-Harrison contest. Although just 41 years old in 1888, he also was a Civil War veteran, thus probably liked the idea of a military pension in his future- after all, preachers really do not make very much income.

In 1888, America still was one of the biggest manufacturers in the world, and the costs for our products were among the lowest in the world. So the tariff issue may not have been

of such importance after all, but it was the loudest of the campaign.

Harrison carried Indiana as well as Massachusetts, and received the majority of electoral votes. Cleveland, however, received the majority of the popular votes. It was a close election, but as one of only four elections when the popular vote did not match the Electoral College vote, the Republican Benjamin Harrison became the next President of the United States.

The context of our ancestor's lives in 1888 included tariffs; today, ours include trade agreements, which can affect prices and demand in similar ways.

Our ancestors needed to educate themselves well before they voted, just as we need to do today.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Image sources per captions.

2. "United States Presidential Election, 1888," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1888

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Society Saturday: NYG&B and John and Phebe Sales



Johannes Vingboons – “Manhattan located on the North River.” Image of Vinckeboons map at Library of Congress ([1]). Joan Vinckeboons (Johannes Vingboon), “Manatvs gelegen op de Noot [sic] Riuier”, 1639, via Wikipedia, Public Domain.

[McMurray Family, Helbling and Springsteen Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

“Hopefully, John Sales, a “Black Sheep” in 1633 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and his daughter Phebe, had a better life in New Netherland.”

Those were what I thought were words to finish up the saga of John and Phebe. However, the New York Genealogical & Biographical Society (NYG&B) has some articles in their *NYG&B Record* that mention John and Phebe, and I was finally able to gain online access to that article. So here are a few more tidbits about the family- some that answer questions in our previous posts, and some that flesh out the story a bit more.

Back in England, the parish registers of Little Waldingfield, Suffolk, England, included an entry for a marriage on 11 August 1625 of John Sales and Philip Soales.” Philip was a name used by women named “Philippa,” which is the feminine of Philip in Latin, the language used in the churches in those days.

John may have been older at his marriage than expected, (possibly not born ~1600) since his property was called “Old Jan’s Land” after his death in 1645- even in that time, 45 was not “old.”.

Those parish registers also included baptisms for “Phoebe Sales, daughter of John” on 1 May 1626, and for another daughter of John, “Sarah Seales,” who was christened 27 July 1628. No other mention of this family is made in these registers.

John Sales, his wife, and daughter Phebe did sail with the Winthrop Fleet in 1630, as surmised in our first post. The wife is not named, nor was she listed as a member of the First Church of Boston when John was noted as #21. Wives were listed for some members, however, so this may indicate that she died on the voyage or shortly after landing in the colony. Little Sarah may have died while they were waiting to sail and not in their own parish, or even once on board, since she only has

the one entry in the parish register.

In 1664, colonist John Greene made a transcript of the Charlestown, Massachusetts town records. He noted that John Sales stayed and became an inhabitant of Charlestown in 1629- though it was actually 1630- his was listed as #13 out of the 17 names recorded. The transcript goes on to explain how the colonists were in such dire straits:

“The summer this year [1632] proving short, and wett, or [our] Crops of Indian Corne (for all this while wee had noe other) was very small and great want threatened us...”

The transcript goes on to describe the crimes of John Sales, and that he was openly punished, all his goods were to be sold to pay restitution, and he would be bound to Mr. Coxeshall until the year 1636.

Phoebe was to be bound out until 1647, and, if the above baptism is indeed the same Phebe, she would have been 21 when she gained her freedom, along with a “cowe cafe” from Mr. Coxeshall. Becoming an apprentice was a way to protect Phebe while her father was bound out, and it would teach her a trade so that she would not follow in the criminal footsteps of her father. This action does lend credence to the idea that she had no mother living, nor siblings.

John Winthrop, the Governor of the Colony, gave some details in his writings concerning John running away to the Indians. Winthrop states that Sales ran away to “... a place twelve miles off, where were seven Indians, whereof four died of the pox while he was there.” John must have been immune to smallpox since he survived, but the Indians did not have immune systems strong enough to fight the new disease brought by colonists to their lands.

John and Phebe Sales were not the only Massachusetts Bay Colonists who wished to remove themselves from the strict communities of the Puritans. Others also left for New

Netherland, and John is first found in those records in 1638. As "Jan Celes" he was given a lease or permission to live at a plantation north of a place later called Rutgers Swamp. This area became known as "Old Jan's Land" and his son-in-law took possession of some of the land, in the midst of Manhattan, after John's death.

Phoebe is listed with a variety of first names and a variety of spellings of her last name in the Dutch records, but she was married 11 February 1640 to Theunis Nyssen. Thus she would have been only about 14, which was legal in New Netherland at that time. She had at least seven children, and they lived in Gowanus, Flatbush, and Brooklyn. There are no known daughters named Philippa, which would have been the Dutch custom, to name a daughter after the wife's mother. If Phebe's mother had died when she was very young, as was earlier hypothesized, she might choose to forego the custom. She did have a daughter named Mary, however- possibly after her step-mother, Mary Roberts?

Of course, we wondered what life was like for John and Phebe in the Dutch Colony, and this excellent article in the NYG&BR gives us more information concerning their daily life. (Our Helbling-Springsteen ancestors lived in Dutch New York possibly in this time period, too, so this information can give us some context to their lives.)

Apparently, Jan Celes made a number of court appearances due to various conflicts with neighbors. The first of those was when Jan was called in for "damage which the defendant's hogs have caused the plaintiff." He also still had some legal dealings in Massachusetts, as on 28 December 1639 he gave a power of attorney to a man from New Plymouth, and it was noted that John was living on Manhattan at that time.

"The fiscal vs. old Jan Selis" was a court case recorded on 26 November 1643. Neighbors testified that "old Jan drove many cows and horses into the swamp" and that he had "cut the cow

of little Manuel with a chopping knife." He was required to pay a fine, pay damages to his victims, and court costs for "having chased and wounded cattle." Jan was also told that if committed such a crime again, he would be banished.

What may often be dismissed as dry genealogy in society journals can really help us learn more about our family. These articles can add much context, as in the case of John and Phebe Sales and the *New York Genealogical & Biographical Record* (NYG&BR). These articles also give us an idea of how the investigation progressed to learn the facts of a life, something we all might be able to use when researching other ancestors. Some say that societies are dead in this age of the internet, but societies provide valuable information for all who pursue the stories of their family- or even, those crazy people who become entranced by the stories of other families.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. "The True Identity of John Sales Alias Jan Celes of Manhattan" by Gwenn F. Epperson, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Vol. 123, No. 2, Pages 65-73, April 1992.
2. Additions and Corrections to "The True Identity of John Sales Alias Jan Celes of Manhattan," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Vol. 124, No. 4, Pages 226-7, October 1993.
3. "Jan Cornelius Buys (Alias Jan Damen) and Teunis Nyssen (or Denyse) and Roelof Willemszen," by John Reynolds Totten, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, Vol. 66, No. 3, Page 284, July 1935.

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Wedding Wednesday: John Sales and his daughter Phebe Sales

tolerant of religious differences, women had more rights, and John and Phebe could be rid of the Puritans and their bad experiences in Massachusetts Bay Colony. John changed his name to be Dutch-sounding- he went by "Jan Celes," and lived in Manhattan. (It was a lot less pricey in those days.)

Jan Celes was recorded in New Amsterdam, the capital, on 21 August 1644 when he married a widow named Maria Sloofs, called "Marritjen [Mary] Roberts" in his will. (The Dutch used a woman's maiden name for all official records, thus 'Roberts' how Mary was recorded.)

Jan's will was dated just eight months later, on 17 April 1645, and he was "...wounded and lying sick abed"- in fact, he was so ill that he could not write, thus gave his last wishes verbally with at least two witnesses.

Phebe Sales, his daughter, had already married, on 11 February 1640, to Theunis Nyssen, in New Amsterdam. In 1645, her father willed half his estate to Theunis, and half to his wife Marritjen, whose portion was to revert to Theunis upon her death or remarriage. Thus Phebe and any heirs would have the benefit of almost all of his estate eventually. Jan did allow in his will that Marritjen could have, if she did not remarry, 200 guilders to will to whomever she wished. John also listed his name as "John Seals" as well as "Jan Celes"; he combined the English and Dutch names when he wrote his signature as, "Jan Seles."

John died sometime between when his will was given on 17 April 1645, and 9 August 1645, when John's widow "Mary Robbertszen" married Thomas Grydy (Greedy) in New York. Interestingly, Thomas was a convicted felon, as had been John Sales. Mary probably died by 13 October 1658 when Thomas made his will, as no wife was mentioned.

Theunis likely died before Phebe, as her second husband was Jan Cornelison Buys; they married in Middelwout (now Flatbush)

on 24 August 1663, and she may have had one child with him. She was died and buried as "Femmetje Jans on 13 December 1666, in the Flatbush Church Cemetery.

Hopefully, John Sales, a "Black Sheep" in 1633 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and his daughter Phebe, had a better life in New Netherland.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. *Pioneers of Massachusetts* by Charles Henry Pope, 1900, via Archive.org.
2. John Sale is listed on page 2 of "Boston Church Records" The Records of the Churches of Boston. CD-ROM. Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2002. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2008 .)
3. Entry for John Sales: *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633, Volumes I-III*. (Online database: *AmericanAncestors.org*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2010), (Originally Published as: New England Historic Genealogical Society. Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633, Volumes I-III*, 3 vols., 1995). He is listed on p. 407-8 in a footnote in the profile of John Coggeshall, page 1616-1618 in his own profile as John Sales.
4. "&c" means "and etc."
5. Double or dual dating is often used during this time period because of the change from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar. See the article on dual dating at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual_dating and <http://www.usgenweb.org/research/calendar.shtml>.
6. The followup on the lives of John Sales and Phebe Sales is a lesson in good genealogy. There was another "John Sales" who was found in Providence, Rhode Island, in the

late 1630s- many thought these two were one and the same. An excellent article by Gwenn Epperson proved that they were not. See "The True Identity of John Sales alias Jan Celes of Manhattan" was printed in the *New York Genealogical & Biographical Record* (NTGBR 123:65-73), and the story was added to in 1994 by Harry Macy (NYGBR 124:226-27).

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Madness Monday: The Punishment of John Sales,

1633

SALE, etc., cont.

John, Charlestown, inhabitant, memb. chh. 1630. Was punished for theft April 1, 1633; was bound over to Mr. Coxeshall for 3 years, and his dau. Phebe was also bound to Mr. C. for 14 years. Ran away to the Indians, but came back Jan. 30, 1634-5. [Col. Rec. and W.]

John Sale and daughter Phebe 'bound over' for theft by John. Found in *Pioneers of Massachusetts* by Charles Henry Pope, 1900. Public domain.

[McMurray Family](#) (Click for Family Tree)

Puritans felt compelled to make sure that others, even non-Puritans, followed the rules/laws of an orderly society. Hence, "Black Sheep" like John Sales were to be made an example, and his punishment was harsh. On the 1st of April 1633, he was "censured by the Court after this manner:"

... all his estate was to be forfeited (though it likely was small)

... he had to pay *double* restitution to all those he had wronged

... he "shall be whipped"

...he will be "bound as servant with any that will retain him for 3 years"

The records continue:

"John Sayle is bound with Mr. Coxeshall for 3 yeares, for which hee is to give him £4 per ann[um]; his daughter is also bound with him for 14 yeares. Mr. Coxeshall is to haue

[have] a sow [female pig] with her, & att the end of her time hee is to giue [give] vnto [unto] her a cowe calfe."

So John's little daughter, possibly just seven-years old (she was baptized 1 May 1626), was punished too. As her mother is not mentioned in any of the Colony records, we can assume that her father was her sole caregiver until this point. At least they kept the two together.

On 4 March 1633/34, John was whipped for running away from his master.

On 30 January 1634/35, John came back after running away again, and this time it was noted that he ran to the Indians. He was most likely whipped, again. It would be interesting to know his experience during the time he was gone, and whether or not his daughter accompanied him.

Two years later, on 7 April 1635, the court records that two of the colony leaders were to examine "the business" between John Sayles, his daughter, Mr. Coxeall, and a John Levins. There are no details of the problem or how it was solved, but by 6 June 1637, Phebe Seales, who had been 'put apprentice' to John Coggeshall (the same 'Mr. Coxehall,' Boston merchant), had caused enough problems that a court intervention was required. Unfortunately the girl "proved overburdensome to him... the Court...have thought it just to ease him of it..." Apparently Coggeshall had "put" Phebe (loaned her out) to John Levins, and that was not working out well either. So the court agreed upon two arbitrators, who were to "...end the difference between the said parties & to set down such order for the ease and discharge of the said John Coggeshall, &c disposing of the said Phebe, as they shall think equal."

Sadly, we do not know how the issues were resolved, but we do know what happened to John Sales and his daughter Phebe Sales. We will finish the story in our next post, on Wednesday.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. *Pioneers of Massachusetts* by Charles Henry Pope, 1900, via Archive.org.
2. John Sale is listed on page 2 of "Boston Church Records" The Records of the Churches of Boston. CD-ROM. Boston, Mass.: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2002. (Online database. *AmericanAncestors.org*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2008 .)
3. Entry for John Sales: *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633, Volumes I-III*. (Online database: *AmericanAncestors.org*, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2010), (Originally Published as: New England Historic Genealogical Society. Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England 1620-1633, Volumes I-III*, 3 vols., 1995). He is listed on p. 407-8 in a footnote in the profile of John Coggeshall, page 1616-1618 in his own profile as John Sales.
4. "&c" means "and etc."
5. Double or dual dating is often used during this time period because of the change from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar. See the article on dual dating at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual_dating and <http://www.usgenweb.org/research/calendar.shtml>.

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putting their smarts to use for the public good instead of spamming our little blog.

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