**Richard Edgerton (c. 1622 – 1691/2)**

Born: Probably England – possibly baptized November 22, 1692, Brook, Ashford Parish, Wye, Co. Kent, England (Brook Parish Records ("BPR" - Kent, England), p. 56)

Died: March 1691/2, Norwich, New London Co., CT (VR: I: 34)

Buried: Post and Gager Cemetery, Norwich, New London Co., CT

Married: Mary Sylvester, April 7/8, 1653, Saybrook, Middlesex Co., CT (Saybrook VR 1:23, Norwich VR I: 34)

Children: Saybrook VR 1:23, Norwich VR I:34)

1. Mary, b. February 3, 1654/5; Saybrook, Middlesex Co., CT
2. Elizabeth, b. December 25, 1657; Saybrook, Middlesex Co., CT
3. Anne, b. September 24, 1659; Saybrook, Middlesex Co., CT
4. John, b. June 12, 1662; Norwich, New London Co., CT
5. Richard, b. March 10, 1664/5; Norwich, New London Co., CT
6. Sarah, b. April 1667; Norwich, New London Co., CT
7. Samuel, b. May 1670; Norwich, New London Co., CT
8. Lydia, b. April 1675; Norwich, New London Co., CT
9. Joseph, b. March 8, 1676/7; Norwich, New London Co., CT

The ancestry of the immigrant Richard Edgerton (1) has not been conclusively established. Research conducted 1990 – 2000 by Robert C. Edgerton [deceased], L. Welch Pogue [deceased], Mark E. Armstrong [deceased], and Brian G. Edgerton produced some evidence suggesting that Richard Edgerton (1) may have been the son of Richard and Ellen (Stroud) Egerden of Wye, County Kent, England. Their son was baptized in the hamlet of Brook (Ashford Parish, Wye) on November 22, 1622. No further record of this Richard is found in Parish records at Brook or Wye; and as Richard Sr. died prior to 1641, it may be reasonable that Richard (1) may have set out on his own, particularly after the 2nd marriage of his mother Ellen, eventually emigrating to the New World.1 There is purported evidence that Richard Sr. was a leather-worker or tanner in the village of Wye – a line of work that Richard (1) may have pursued. See *The Tentative Ancestry of Richard Edgerton* - http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~edgerton/.

A “Richard Edgerton” from Ashford Parish, County Kent appears in Volume I of Charles E. Banks’ *Topographical Dictionary of 2685 English Immigrants to New England, 1620-1650”*; however Mr. Banks’ source for this entry has not been found, despite a posthumous search of his original notes.2

James Savage’s *“Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England”,* (Vol. II, p. 100) provides the following entry for Richard Edgerton (1):

“EDGARTON, RICHARD, Saybrook, m. 8 Apr. 1653, Mary Sylvester, had Mary, b. 3 Feb. 1655; Eliz. 25 Dec. 1657; Ann or Hannah, 24 Sept. 1659; rem. Next yr. to Norwich, there had John, 12 June 1662, Richard, 10 Mar. 1665; Sarah, Apr. 1667; Samuel, Mary 1670; Lydia, Apr. 1675; and Joseph, 8 Mar. 1677.”

Over many years, a number of alternative theories have been proposed regarding the parentage of Richard Edgerton (1); however none have offered definitive evidence. The most widespread of these, based upon deep-rooted family tradition, claims the Richard (1) was the youngest of four sons of John Edgerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater 3. According to this tradition, Richard (1) emigrated to Saybrook, CT in 1632, along with his older brother John (2nd son of John Edgerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater). When the 1st Earl of Bridgewater died in England in 1649, and upon the subsequent death of his eldest son, John Edgerton (elder brother of Richard) returned to England to succeed to the family’s title and estates. Richard (1) remained in America, where he subsequently married and became the progenitor of the Connecticut line of Edgertons. This tradition, though long-held, has not yet been supported by any known documentation or research. Supposed accounts of a John Edgerton in early Saybrook, Connecticut have also not been substantiated despite claims to the contrary. (footnote 4)

Another family tradition, placing Richard (1) as a son of Sir Rowland Egerton (1578-1646) of Cheshire, England and his wife Bridget Grey (1577-1648, daughter of Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton), is outlined without citation in *The Egertons of Oulton*, by Sir Philip de Malpas Grey-Egerton (1869).5

Colket lists Richard Edgerton as being first in Saybrook and then going to Norwich. (Colket 1985, p. 104, Bradford Compact Newsletter, Summer 1998, p. 29)

The earliest documented mention of Richard Edgerton (1) in America is found in the records of Saybrook, Middlesex Co., Connecticut. From the Town Meeting notes there, dated January 4, 1648, he was listed as owning a “house lot and three acres and a half of land”. At the same meeting, Richard (1) was held libel for defective fences and allowing hogs in a neighbor’s corn field (ref: Saybrook Town Records – Printed Edition; Vol. I; p. 156). In 1650, Richard (1) was among forty proprietors who were granted additional lands in Saybrook. There are several family traditions of Richard (1) being in Saybrook as early as 1636/7; but documentary evidence has not been presented.

Contrary to the above noted Saybrook records, Richard Edgerton (1) is listed as arriving in Connecticut in 1653 (Filby's 1991-1995 *Cumulated Supplement to his Passenger and Immigration Lists Index*, Filby and Boyer, p. 580).

A plat map of the early layout of Saybrook (reconstructed from Volume I of the Saybrook Land Records) was compiled in 1935 by Mr. Gilman C. Gates of the Saybrook Historical Society, for his publication, “*Saybrook at the Mouth of the Connecticut River”*. Richard Edgerton’s (1) home-lot, as shown on this map, prominently comprised three-and-a-half acres and was very favorably located along the North Cove, directly across the protected bay from the mouth of the Connecticut River to the north. The large Edgerton home-lot bordered the Saybrook Meeting House yard on the south, and the home-lots of Matthew Griswold and Joseph Hingham (to the west) and John Clark (to the east).6

On April 7 (or 8), 1653 Richard Edgerton (1) was married at Saybrook, Connecticut to Mary Sylvester. The marriage was recorded twice – first at Saybrook (VR I: 23), where it was noted only as the “marriage…of Richard Odyushun” (no mention of the bride’s name), and later at Norwich (VR I:34). The former record gives a date of April 8th, while the latter lists a date of April 7th. It is interesting to note that the variant spelling of Odyushun for Richard’s surname in the Saybrook record may be an indication of the phonetic pronunciation of the patronymic name at that time.

The above-listed naming pattern of Richard and Mary’s children may provide a clue to the parentage of both Richard and Mary. In particular, the name of their first son – John, may point to the father or an uncle of Richard (1) – whether natural born or from a non-paternal event, the latter reflective of the approximate 30% incidence of births out of wedlock in England at the time, particularly with the landed gentry.7

The parentage and ancestry of Richard’s (1) wife Mary Sylvester has also not yet been ascertained. The fact that her name was omitted from the Saybrook marriage record perhaps indicates that she was almost certainly not of that town, a fact confirmed by the complete absence of any Sylvester families mentioned in the early Saybrook records. It has been proposed that Mary may have been associated with the prominent Sylvester family on nearby Shelter Island – just across the bay from Saybrook, Connecticut; possibly a daughter of Giles and Mary (Arnold) Sylvester or perhaps a daughter from an unrecorded union of Nathaniel Sylvester. 8 Exhaustive research into the Sylvester family of Shelter Island conducted by Mr. Henry B. Hoff F.A.S.G., would appear to refute this supposition. For further details see *The Ancestry of Mary Sylvester* - <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~edgerton/>.

An intriguing sugar trade connection between the Edgerton (Egerton) and Sylvester families has been sup positioned through research of Robert C. Edgerton (deceased) and Brian G. Edgerton, but no definitive proof to date has come to light. In addition to the confirmed sugar trade connection with Nathaniel Sylvester at Shelter Island (adjacent to Saybrook, Connecticut) and brothers Giles and Constant Sylvester in Barbados, records indicate there was an Egerton sugar plantation in Barbados with John Edgerton, 3rd Earl of Bridgewater (1646-1701). Specifically the 3rd Earl of Bridgewater or his father purchased a sugar plantation interest from Sir Wm. Courteen abt. 1660 (see footnote 8). The Egerton Plantation was in the northwestern portion of Barbados, approximately two miles north of the Sylvester plantations – footnote 6. (ref: *Thomas Jefferys, Geographer to the King, Map: Appearance of Barbadoes”*). This Egerton plantation was passed on to Scroop Egerton, 4th Earl of Bridgewater (1681-1745). Records indicate that Charles Egerton, younger brother of Scoop was also associated with the sugar industry in Barbados (d: 7 November 1725, Barbados).

The Barbados link to John Egerton, 2nd Earl of Bridgewater, ties to Lord Willoughby (d: 16 March 1648, Barbados) who had large land holdings in Barbados and owned a fleet of ships for the prosperous sugar trade with England. Willoughby’s 2nd wife was Ellen Egerton, a daughter of John Egerton, above.

Additionally, making possibilities even more intriguing, there appears to be a Barbados connection to the family of Rowland Egerton (possibly a son of Sir Rowland, see footnote 3. Records note a Robert Egerton (b: abt. 1660, Barbados), son of Rowland of Christ Church Parish, Barbados (ref: *“Barbados Wills and Administrations”, Vol. I, p. 313*). A Roger Egerton, son of Rowland [therefore a grandson of Sir Rowland Egerton], was buried 5//16/1662 Barbados. (Paul Egerton, Cheshire, U.K., un-cited – email correspondence, 8/1/17).

"BARBADOS IMMIGRANTS - In the British State Papers, Colonial Calendar - subdivision*, 'America and the West Indies, 1661-68’*, (para. 1657) - it is stated that 1200 persons who had formerly been proprietors or tradesmen had gone from Barbados to New England between the years 1643 and 1647. Others also came from St. Kitts (para. 1212). What trace is there of these immigrants in their new abode? May not genealogists who cannot trace their lineage direct to England gain clues to it via the Barbados? James D. Butler, Madison, Wis." Ref: NEHGR Vol. 44, July 1890, p. 316.

In 1660 9, the original town of Saybrook was largely abandoned, the majority of its inhabitants moving inland to the north, where they founded the town of Norwich along the banks of the Thames River. The land there (comprising approximately nine miles square) had been deeded to them by Uncas, sachem of the Mohegan tribe (see map at right), in gratitude for the colonists recent assistance in repelling a siege by the rival Narragansett tribe. The town was sanctioned by the Connecticut General Court in 1659, with the main migration taking place the following year. Originally known by its Indian name, “Mohegan”, the town was renamed Norwich in 1662, probably after Norwich, England, where many of the original settlers had come from.

Richard Edgerton (1) was one of the thirty-five original proprietors of Norwich, and was granted a home lot, consisting of “six acres, more or less, abutting on land of Thomas Post on the southeast, abutting on the river on the southwest 10 rods & 10 feet, abutting on the highway 12 rods & 12 feet.” Additional lands were assigned to him in later divisions, as noted in the Norwich *Book of Grants.* He was admitted a Freeman of the Colony of Connecticut on May 14, 1668, his name appearing on the Norwich roll of Freeman the following year. He served as Townsman (selectman) in 1678 and Constable in 1680. It is surmised that Richard probably earned his livelihood as a farmer and planter although family tradition holds he may also have been a leather tanner.10

As noted previously, Richard and Mary Edgerton had six more children born in Norwich in addition to their first three daughters born in Saybrook. The four sons, John, Richard, Samuel, and Joseph each married and had families that perpetuated the Edgerton name in Norwich for many generations. There appears to be no further record of the eldest two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth; they may have died in childhood, perhaps prior to the move to Norwich. The third daughter, Anne (aka “Hannah”), is generally reported to have married Thomas Wiley “of Colchester”, although the primary source of this information is unknown and there is no further account of the couple. The two younger daughters were also married and resided in Norwich – Sarah married to Joseph Reynolds and Lydia to Nathaniel Backus.

The original Richard and Mary Edgerton house in Norwich, Connecticut dating to the 1660’s is still extant and is believed to be one of only three original Norwich dwellings still in use. Saved from demolition, the house was moved in 1956 from its original location at 140 West Town Street 10 (where the Norwich Town Road Exit off I-395 is currently located) to an isolated location at 100 Clinton Avenue. In July 2001 the home was found abandoned, in a state of disrepair and owned by the Norwich municipality for unpaid back taxes. Due to the efforts of Brian and Deb Edgerton in July-August 2001, the mid-17th century “salt-box” home was ‘re-discovered’ and entered into the Urban Homestead/Property Recycling Program and with promotion by the Connecticut Historic Preservation News was sold at auction for historic preservation. The original home was beautifully and accurately restored and continues to stand proudly in historic Norwich, Connecticut (see photos, below).

Edgerton Home - front 72401.TIF

Richard Edgerton (1) died at Norwich, Connecticut in March 1691/2, his death being noted in the vital records there (VR I: 34). He left a will, which was proved at New London County Court on June 7, 1692, as noted in the following entry under that date found in the New London County Court Records (unnumbered):

“The Last Will and Testament of Richard Edgerton Deceased together with an Inventory of sd Estate was Exhibited in Court, proved and ordered to be Recorded & power of administration is granted according to the will.”

Sadly the will itself has not been discovered and was probably among those records destroyed in the New London fire of September 1781. The will was referred to in subsequent deeds and land transfers, from which some of its contents may be inferred. From a Norwich deed dated April 1, 1695, Richard Edgerton (2) sold to his brother Samuel, “all that my thirty acres of land lying on Middle Hill which was given me by my father as appears by his will, which thirty acres was part of my father’s Third Division Lott” (Norwich LR 2A:208).

It is most likely that Richard divided his Norwich property among his four sons 11  – they are all found owning lands in Norwich in the subsequent years. At the time of his death, Richard (1) still owned lands in Saybrook, Connecticut, which were apparently bequeathed to his children. From a Saybrook deed dated February 16, 1718/9, five of Richard’s heirs – “Richard Edgerton, Samuel Edgerton, Joseph Edgerton and Joseph Reynolds & Nathaniel Backus in right of their wives Sarah and Lydia Dec’d” – deeded to John Edgerton [3] and Joseph Edgerton [3], Grandsons of Richard Edgerton”, lands which had belonged to their father Richard Edgerton (1), (Saybrook LR 2:527).

Founders' Monument - Norwich, CT.TIFThe death of Richard Edgerton’s (1) wife Mary (Sylvester) or her burial are not found in the Norwich records.

Richard Edgerton (1) was almost certainly buried in the ancient Norwich burying lot, which lay next to his home. A memorandum on the Norwich town records notes that: “The Towne hath purchased a burying place of Thomas Post – in the home lot of said Post – toward the rear of his lot.” This lot is adjacent to the original Edgerton home, so it seems certain that Richard, his wife Mary and his eldest son John would have been interred there, as were most of the early settlers of Norwich. The “Norwich Founders Monument” (Photo at right) inscribed with the names of the thirty-five original proprietors (including “Richard Egerton”), was erected on the ancient burial site. The cemetery later became known as the “Post and Gager” Cemetery. The ancient stones marking the early Norwich burials have long since sunk from sight and disappeared. Entry to the early burial ground is through an adjacent private drive.

1Research by Robert C. Edgerton of Naples, Florida (and others - Duncan Harrington, Michael J. Edgerton, Charles Banks, L. Welch Pogue, Mark Armstrong, and Brian Edgerton) has led to church christening records being uncovered for a Richard Egerden in the small English hamlet of "Brook", Parish of Ashford in Kent, England dated 22 November 1622. Further documents indicate this Richard Egerden's father; Richard Egerden Sr. remarried after the early death of his first wife about 1625. Ms. Sally Edgerton Adams in a letter of 15 Feb 1980 notes that Richard Egerden Sr. married a widow in 1628 in Egerton, Parish of Ashford, Kent, England. This latter information was likely obtained from the Historical Society at the University of Wisconsin but has not been collaborated.

Upon the subsequent death of his father in 1641, his son Richard Egerden, then about 19, perhaps struck out on his own, possibly immigrating to the New World prior to 1650, consistent with Banks' Topographical Dictionary of Emigrants, noted below for the immigration of "Richard Edgarton" from Ashford, Kent, England.

2 See also Banks various manuscripts (found upon Banks' death in 1931). These manuscripts (perhaps 100 bound folios) are found in the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress. The first folio is a large hardback volume with handwritten title *"Banks, Charles E. (Compiler) Topographical Dictionary of English Immigrants to New England, 1620, 1650, Maps 405 pp., and Index of Names, with printed Index of Places 4 to buckram."* (courtesy: Bradford Compact Newsletter, Summer 1998, p. 27, L. Welch Pogue). The name of Richard Edgerton from Ashford Parish in Kent County appears on page 197 of this first volume. Again - the source for this reference has not been ascertained.

3 John Edgerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater (1579- 4 Dec 1649, Little Gaddesden, Hertfordsire, England, son of Lord Thomas Edgerton, 1st Viscount of Brackley and Elizabeth Ravenscroft. Married Lady Frances Stanley (b: 1 May 1583, d: 11 March 1636). Children: Elizabeth, Mary, Frances, Alice, Arabella, James (1616-1620), Charles (b: 1623), and John, 2nd Earl of Bridgewater (b: 30 May 1632, d: 26 October 1686), Little Gaddesden, Hertfordshire, England). This biographical record clearly does not support the family tradition of brothers John and Richard in Saybrook, Connecticut in 1632, sons of John Edgerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater.

4 "EGERTON - John, son of John, Earl of Bridgewater, came to Saybrook, Conn., 1632; he returned to Eng., to succeed to his father's title. RICHARD, brother of the preceding, founder of the family in America, came to Saybrook, Conn., 1632, is on record at Norwich, Conn., 1655." ref: *"Directory of the Ancestral Heads of New England Families 1620-1700",* compiled by Frank R. Holmes, 1964, p. Ixxv. NOTE: The original will and disposition of John Edgerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater, as deciphered by Brian Edgerton in 2012, refers only to his son John Edgerton.

5 Sir Rowland Egerton (1578-1636) had four surviving sons named in his will – Thomas, Rowland, Philip, Charles, and (possibly) Hugh or Ralph.. There is no reference to a son Richard. Correspondence with a Paul Egerton of Winsford (formerly Over & Wharton), Cheshire, England in 2016 noted multiple DNA connections (“hits”) of his Cheshire Egertons to descendants of Richard Edgerton (1) of Connecticut. Paul Egerton has an ancestral paper trail to Thomas Egerton (possibly baptized 13 October 1639, Marbury, Cheshire, England) who had sons Thomas, Rowland, Philip, and Charles. The parentage of this Thomas Egerton is currently unknown although from geography and naming patterns, a connection to Sir Rowland Egerton may be surmised. Incidentally the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) of the Edgertons of Hertfordshire (John Edgerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater), England and Rowland Egerton of Cheshire, England is Philip Egerton (1415-1473) who married Margery Mainwaring (b: 1420) of Cheshire based upon research by Robert C. Edgerton (deceased) and Brian G. Edgerton. The ancestral Egerton records go back seven prior generations from Philip, and then four earlier generations prior to the establishment of the patriarchal surname!

6The prominence in size and central location of Richard Edgerton’s (1) home-lot in early Saybrook may be an indication of his well-established social or financial status at the time. In the view of Brian Edgerton, this may point to a more prominent English parentage for Richard (1) than presented by *The Tentative Ancestry of Richard Edgerton* - <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~edgerton/> wherein Richard (1) is posited to be the son of a deceased leather tanner from the small hamlet of Wye, County Kent, England.

7 There was a convention in the order in which the ancestors were honored – probably to avoid insulting anyone. Although it was far from universally used, the usual British naming convention was as follows:

• The first son was named after the paternal grandfather (in this case – Richard’s (1) father)  
• The second son was named after the maternal grandfather (in this case – Mary’s father)  
• The third son was named after the father  
• The fourth son was named after the oldest paternal uncle  
• The fifth was named after the second oldest paternal uncle or the oldest maternal uncle

• The first daughter was named after the maternal grandmother  
• The second daughter was named after the paternal grandmother  
• The third daughter was named after the mother  
• The fourth daughter was named after the oldest maternal aunt  
• The fifth was named after the second oldest maternal aunt or the oldest paternal aunt

8Giles Sylvester (b: abt. 1583, London, Co. Middlesex, England, d: abt. 1652, Amsterdam, Netherlands) married Mary Arnouts/Arnold (b: abt. 1584 Laystad, England, d: aft. 1613, Kalvestraat, Holland) had at least eight children including sons Nathaniel, Giles, Constant, and several daughters including a Mercy and a Mary. Their daughter, Mary married Isaac Cartwright. The Sylvester family was prominently engaged in the English sugar trade in the mid-seventeenth century – particularly the so-called ‘triangle trade’ between England-Barbados-Shelter Island. Nathaniel Sylvester owned a large plantation on the northern end of Shelter Island just across the cove from Saybrook, Connecticut for the export of firewood to the sugar refineries in Barbados. Giles Sylvester owned sugar plantations in the western region of Barbados in a partnership arrangement with his brother Nathaniel. A third brother, Constant was the principal Sylvester business partner residing in Barbados in the mid-seventeenth century. Constant Sylvester was well connected to the Barbados sugar industry, having married Grace Walrond, daughter of Humphrey Walrond, the Acting Governor of Barbados from 1646-1650. The two Sylvester plantations are found in St. George's Parish in the northwest part of Barbados, along the road approximately five miles NE from Bridgetown. (Ref: "*A New Map of the Island of Barbados",* FHL Map 972.981 E71p pt.a, by Phillip Lea of London. An Egerton Plantation is also found within 2 miles to the north of the Sylvester plantations on Thomas Jeffery's Map of Barbados. This plantation was associated with Sir John Edgerton, 2nd Earl of Bridgewater who purchased this plantation in a 'distress sale' from the Courteen brothers about 1660. (ref: *“A New Description of the Island of Bardbadoes”*Map 972.981 E7Lp, pt. a).

9”June 15th 1659. Mr. Willis is appointed by Gen Court to go to Saybrook to assist Major Mason in examining the suspicion about witchcraft and act accordingly." ref: *"Glimpses of Saybrook in Colonial Days",* Harriet Chapman Chesebrough, pp. 89. Perhaps there's a connection here with the 1660 removal of much of the Saybrook congregation to "Mohegan", later called Norwich, up the coast at this juncture in history. Another factor may have been the promise of more land and room for expansion, not readily offered on the geographically constrained Saybrook site.

10Linda Edgerton, a family historian living in Norwich (2001) asserted without proof that the original Edgerton home stood across the highway from the early tannery in ancient Norwich. If true, this may collaborate the tentative ancestry of Richard Edgerton (1) (ref: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~edgerton/>.) wherein Richard’s father in Wye, England was purported to have been a leather tanner and Richard (1) followed the trade in the American Colony.

11The eldest son John died shortly after his father’s death at Norwich in May 1692, prior to his 30th birthday, leaving a young widow Mary (Reynolds), son John (three years old) and possibly an infant son, Dennis.