

THOMAS WELLES

Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1655, 1658

Born: ca. 1590 in Stourton, Whichford, Warwickshire, England

College: None

Political Party: None

Offices: Member, Court of Magistrates, 1637-1654

Deputy Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1654, 1656, 1657, 1659

Treasurer of the Colony of Connecticut 1639

Secretary of the Colony of Connecticut 1640-1649

Commissioner of the United Colonies 1649

Governor of the Colony of Connecticut 1655, 1658

Died: January 14, 1659/60 at Wethersfield, CT

Thomas Welles is the only man in Connecticut's history to hold all four top offices: governor, deputy governor, treasurer, and secretary. He was born ca. 1590 in Stourton, Whichford, Warwickshire, England, the son of Robert and Alice Welles.

Thomas arrived in Boston prior to 9 June 1636, when his deed was witnessed, but was probably not the Thomas Welles who was a passenger on the *Susan and Ellen* in 1635 as reported in some sources (that Thomas was probably the Thomas Welles who became a resident of Ipswich, Massachusetts). Thomas is said to have been a secretary to Lord Saye and Sele. While no primary evidence for this has been found, the books in his estate suggest that he had a good education and he did have close associations with Saye and Sele, although he had little to do with the development of the Saybrook Colony. He perhaps lived at Newtown (now Cambridge), MA for a while, and was probably one of the group of about 100 to come to Hartford with Thomas Hooker in 1636.

Thomas Welles served a total of nineteen years in various Colony of Connecticut positions. He was a member of the first Court of Magistrates, elected March 28, 1637, and was reelected as a member of the Court of Magistrates from 1638 until 1654. During his terms as magistrate in 1648, 1651, and 1654 he sat on the panel hearing the

witchcraft trials of Mary Johnson, John and Joan Carrington, and Lydia Gilbert. In 1639 he was elected as the first treasurer of the Colony of Connecticut, and from 1640-1649 served as the colony's secretary. In this capacity he transcribed the Fundamental Orders into the official colony records. On May 18, 1654 he was elected as Deputy Governor and became the acting moderator of the General Court, as the elected governor, Edward Hopkins, was in England. He was elected governor in 1655 and 1658 and served again as deputy governor for 1656, 1657, and 1659. He was a commissioner to the New England Confederation in 1649 and in 1654. For a more extensive summary of Thomas Welles' service to the Connecticut Colony, see Appendix B of Siemiatoski's genealogy, below.

Thomas Welles married Alice Tomes soon after July 5, 1615 in Long Marston, Gloucestershire, and the couple had eight children. After her death, he married again about 1646 in Wethersfield. His second wife was Elizabeth (nee Deming) Foote, sister of John Deming and widow of Nathaniel Foote. Elizabeth had seven children by her previous marriage; there were no children from the second marriage.

Thomas Welles lived in Hartford from 1636 until the time of his second marriage. His house was on the same street as Governors Edward Hopkins, George Wyllys, John Webster, and Thomas H. Seymour, a street that was known as "Governors Street" until more recent times, when the name was changed to "Popieluszko Court". He died on January 14, 1660 at Wethersfield and was probably buried there. Some sources indicate that his remains were later transferred to the Ancient Burying Ground in Hartford. In either case, his grave is presently unmarked. His name appears on the Founders Monument in Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground.

Sources:

National Cyclopedia of American Biography. New York: J. T. White, 1898- , s.v. "Thomas Welles" [CSL call number HistRef E 176 .N27].

Norton, Frederick Calvin. *The Governors of Connecticut*. Hartford: Connecticut Magazine Co., 1905 [CSL call number HistRef F93 .N 88 1905].

Raimo, John W. *Biographical Dictionary of American Colonial and Revolutionary Governor 1607-1789*. Westport, CT: Meckler Books, 1980 [CSL call number E 187.5 .R34].

Siematowski, Donna Holt. *The Descendants of Governor Thomas Welles of Connecticut, 1590-1658*. 1990. Baltimore: Gateway Press, 1990 [CSL call number CS 71 .W55 1990].

Talcott, Mary Kingsley. *The Original Proprietors*. Reprint. [Hartford?]: Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford, Inc., 1986 [CSL call number HistRef F 104 .H353 A26 1986].

Welles, Lemuel. "The English Ancestry of Gov. Thomas Welles of Connecticut," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 80 (1926), pp. 279-447 [CSL call number F 1 .N56].

Further Reading:

Welles, Edmund. *The Life and Public Services of Thomas Welles, Forth Governor of Connecticut* 1940.

Portrait:

No known portrait of Thomas Welles exists.

Prepared by the History and Genealogy Unit, Connecticut State Library, April 1999.