



#### IV. BANBURY

While in Scotland and London I spent time scouting where would be the best place to hunt up ancestors on my free day. It had to be Banbury, whatever that was. In London I asked around and found out that Banbury was a modest sized town on the fringes of the Cotswolds in the Mid-England range, not in London's orbit as much as Birmingham's. None of this made much sense to me, despite trying to nose out information in guidebooks and the like while in London.

I brought with me some knowledge already won during years of research. In New England the descendants of the following English immigrants inter-married from 1630 until my grandfather, Willis Isaac Savage, was born on Savage Hill in East Berlin, Connecticut, on March 20, 1880.

All his ancestors arrived in New England during the Great Puritan Migration. To make sense of why and how of my grandfather's ancestors left their homes forever, I focused on their hometowns. Based on the records I could establish, I broke English immigrants into groups based on where they came from. The evidence let me identify two home areas that were of interest on this trip.

OXFORDSHIRE & WARWICKSHIRE: *Samuel Boreman*, born in Banbury, Oxfordshire, was baptized August 20, 1615, a son of Christopher & Julian (Carter) Boreman, of Claydon. A cooper by trade, Boreman came to New England aboard the ship *Nicholas* in April 1638, settled in Ipswich and in 1641 moved to Wethersfield. *John Savage* and perhaps his wife, Elizabeth Dubbin, came from Banbury or Claydon. They were married in Hartford in 1652 and were among the founders of Middletown in 1653. *Mary Betts* was born about 1605 near Clayton, Oxfordshire, part of Banbury Hundred. With her husband John and three children, she came over in the 1630s and wound up in Hartford in 1635 with *Elder John White* and Rev. Thomas Hooker, whose congregation came, for the most part, from Essex. The Bettses' daughter Mary married Samuel Boreman in Hartford in 1641. *Edward Griswold*, born in 1607, near Kenilworth, Warwickshire, was a son of George Griswold, and grandson of Francis, of Solihull, a village nearby. In 1639, Edward Griswold and his wife, Margaret, moved to Windsor and in 1663 moved west of Saybrook and established Killingworth, and in 1673 moved to Lyme.

EAST ANGLIA: *Elder John White*, born about 1600, near Chelmsford, Essex, sailed on June 22, 1632, with wife Mary aboard the ship *Lyon*, which arrived in Boston September 16, 1632. John White was a founder of Hartford in 1636. William Mead, born in 1600 in Elmdon, Essex, married in 1625 and

sailed in April 1635 for Plymouth Colony aboard the ship Elizabeth, captained by a man named Stagg. *William Mead* originally settled in Wethersfield but in 1641 he moved to Stamford, where he was one of the 21 founders. *Nicholas Knapp* was born in 1605 in Essex and became the husband of *Elinor Lockwood*, who was a daughter of Edmund Lockwood, of Combs, Suffolk. They sailed with Winthrop's fleet of 11 ships in 1630 to Shawmut Peninsula, now Boston. The Knapps settled with Sir Richard Saltonstall's congregation in Watertown, which was established July 30, 1630. In 1646, the Knapps moved to Wethersfield and in 1648 resettled in Stamford.



There are many ways to trace the genealogical line linking the Betts and Boardman ancestors to the Savage ancestors of Connecticut. One goes like this: Samuel Boreman married Mary Betts, the daughter of John and Mary Betts, in 1641 in Hartford. They moved to Wethersfield where they had a son, Isaac, in 1642. Isaac married Abiah Kimberly in 1661 and together they had a son, Isaac Jr., who in 1699 married Rebecca Benton. Together they had a son, Josiah Bordman, in 1705, who married Rachel Cole in 1734. Josiah and Rachel Bordman had a son, Nathaniel, in 1742 in Middletown who would spell his name Boardman. Nathaniel Boardman married Eunice Moss in 1770 and they had a daughter in 1780 named Esther who in 1809 married Seth Savage Jr., the grandfather of Henry Elliot Savage, my great-grandfather and the father of Willis Isaac Savage, the father of my mother.

Everybody got that?

To get to Banbury, I took a six-pound cab ride from the Savoy Hotel to Paddington Station, where another 13.50 pounds purchased me a second-class round trip ticket to Banbury. Paddington Station is like most: open, under repair, noisy, and full of people anxiously going to and fro. I stood in line at the ticket window. When it was my turn I asked questions over and over to make sure I understood where I was supposed to do and when. It still didn't work. The Banbury train I was aiming for had been canceled and I couldn't understand the guy's accent well enough to figure out what was what. There was a vague suggestion about getting an alternate route, which had a few change combinations. Only after asking two blue coated porters who were originally from the West Indies was I able to determine what I had to do.

I got the 9:35 a.m. British Rail train to Reading, where I switched to the Oxford-Banbury-Birmingham line. On the Oxford to Banbury run I sat across from an elderly white-haired woman and her middle-aged daughter, who were both knitting. The elderly woman had a pleasant, somewhat pixilated grin. The daughter was more savvy, and after a while she asked where I was bound. I told her.

“I don’t know Banbury,” she said. “Are you Canadian?”  
“American.”

They were pleasant people and we had an easy-going chat: she was going to visit her mother in York for a week; no, she knew nothing about Banbury. They were curious that I would hunt anything up there. I should come to York, about which they gave me a travelogue that I did not understand.

At 11 a.m. I said my good-byes and left the train in Banbury. It was a gray overcast day, with drizzle now and again. The station was decayed brick and clapboard and cement. This was a tired spot.

The young people hanging out at the station favored the clothing styles that were popular in the states in the 1950s: black motorcycle jacket with the belts and studs, dark pants and shirts and black work boots. The hair, owing to the rain or lack of a timely washing, was skaggy and ill-cut. So far, the whole place looked as if it could use with a clean, comb and dry.

I had about five hours and it was time to make the most of it. I could see a church steeple up a hill a mile or so away, and knew that the thing was to simply walk. After the moderate tension of the journey, the thing to do now was relax, follow my nose and watch that I don’t get hit in traffic.

I made my way along Bridge Street toward the center of town, past the old Town Hall, along High Street, and through a narrow alley to the open V-shaped market. Away from the station, Banbury, a town of about 20,000, revealed itself as a vital shopping area. This wasn’t the England of the tour guides. No royalty here; no Agatha Christie, no “Upstairs Downstairs.” This was a Saturday shopping day for the English middle class; the streets were blocked off from traffic and jammed with people in town for the day. There was an open-air market with dozens of tents propped open selling fresh meat and fish, clothing, and all manner of sundries. The town itself contained healthy shops, with a good range of quality. There was a Woolworth’s, an upscale bookstore, a housewares store, and a real estate shop posting local properties for sale for amounts that would be comparable, to, say, Middletown, Connecticut.

As I made my way through the crowd, I passed a gazebo where some 20 carolers were performing for a small gathering singing about Jesus Christ Almighty and his works. The singers were young and old, led by a bearded layman, and they had guitars and enthusiasm. I learned later just how appropriate their performance was for Banbury.

I followed a sign that said Banbury Museum and Banbury Cross. In time after a walk down Parsons I came to the center of a wide area called the Horse Fair where the legendary Cross known from the 18th century rhyme, destroyed by Puritans and resurrected in the Victorian era in what now is at the center of traffic turn-around. The latest version of the Cross, constructed in 1859, was 52 feet 6 inches high. Over the years, various statues and heraldry

to commemorate Victoria and her family's life have been added to the structure. Now, even if bogus, the Cross gives visual focus at least to a mythology, as well as a focus for tourism and trade, even if a far cry from the Cross's original reality.

The original Banbury Cross stimulated the nursery rhyme that is still taught. In 1744, the first of the variety of Banbury Cross rhymes appeared, with a varying verse involving little Nancy (1780), an old woman (1784) and a fine lady (1797).

Ride a cock-horse,  
To Banbury Cross;  
To see a fine lady  
Ride on a white horse.  
Rings on her fingers,  
Bells on her toes,  
She shall have music  
Wherever she goes.

Across from the Cross was the Banbury Museum. Inside was a modest coffee shop that served Banbury Cakes and sold local historical material. I introduced myself and within moments was joined by a very helpful woman who asked a few questions.

I told her that from my research in Hartford I knew that my ancestors Mary Betts and Samuel Boreman came from Banbury and that it was also the probable origin community of John Savage as well. I also knew that spelling of names was a sometime thing. Boreman could be Borman, Bowerman, Bordman, and Boardman, as it wound up being in Middletown by 1725. Savage was sometimes spelled Savadg, Savidg, and Savadge.

"Oh, well, my goodness," she said, "the Betts family is well known here. They are the bakers who made Banbury Cakes famous." She had also heard of the Boremans and Savages.

She took me upstairs to a small display of local wares. There was a large sign that once hung in front of the Betts family bakery on High Street. She also showed me a box in which the Betts family used to sell their Banbury Cakes. On the cover was the legend:

*Samuel Betts's Banbury Cakes are spoken of by Philmon Holland and Ben Jonson as far back at 1608 and 1614 but were not popular until Betty White brought them into public favour about 1760. The above firm has held a very high reputation for generations as manufacturers of the Genuine Banbury Cakes and claim descent from the famous Betty White.*

This was too much fun. She led me to the basement, where she took out

some retail receipts and a book called Banbury Wills and Inventories Part One 1591-1620 Vol. 13 of the Banbury Historical Society, transcribed and abridged by E.R.C. Brinkworth and J. S. W. Gibson, with an introduction by G. H. Dannatt and edited by Gibson. She also found photographs of the Betts bakery, some newspaper clippings about their business, and copies of the Oxford County History about Banbury Hundred. In a bookstore nearby I purchased A History of Banbury, edited and published in 1958 by William Potts, the third in his family to edit the Banbury Guardian, the local newspaper, and updated in 1978 by Edward T. Clark.



In the basement of the Banbury Museum, the docent helped me comb through the records to find evidence that might point to family members. There were books containing parish records, retail accounts, and files that the docent retrieved from cardboard boxes, using a filing system I didn't understand. In time I pieced together some facts about the Boardmans, Bettses, and Savages.

There were a few Boreman, Bow(e)man or Bow(e)rman(e) in the book on wills. John Bowerman, a husbandman from Neithrop, married a widow named Katherine Keeling June 23, 1607. He died 20 years later and was buried May 28, 1627. In a will dated 1611, his name is spelled Boreman and he oversaw the estate of John Kymbell, also a Neithrop husbandman. Christopher Borman, who I believe was Samuel Boreman's father, was listed on taking inventory on wills in 1609 and 1610.

I had learned from my research in America that the mother of my ancestor Samuel Boreman was named Julia Carter, who had a father named Felix Carter. In the basement, it appeared that a man named Nathaniel Boardman had a mother named Julia Carter, whose father was named Felix. The records show that Felix's father, Felix Carter (Sr.), who died in 1619, left an estate in Clayton valued at more than 130 pounds.

The earliest Savage family member I could find was named Thomas Savage who was baptized March 29 and buried September 17, 1572. When he died in 1572, Thomas Savage left a wife named Margaret with a six-month-old son, Bennet, and probably two other sons, named Thomas Jr. and John. When Bennet Savage died at age 21 in 1593, he left a will dated June 28 in which he left 10 shillings each to John Savage and Thomas Savage (Jr.), and also 10 shillings and two silver spoons to his 16-year-old stepbrother, Matthew Harrys.

Matthew Harrys was born to Margaret (Savage) and Thomas Harrys, a husbandman from Calthrope, who were married July 4, 1574, less than two years after Thomas Savage (Sr.)'s death. Margaret, Thomas Sr.'s widow, had been left with a six-month-old son and probably at least two other sons. On

February 22, 1576, Matthew Harrys was born to Thomas Harrys and Margaret (Savage) Harrys.

The recorded information was most available about the Harrys family, into which Thomas Savage's widow Margaret married and found a comfortable home. Thomas and Margaret (Savage) Harrys lived in Calthorpe in a home of at least 12 rooms containing the belongings of a prosperous farmer, which were listed in great detail in Thomas Harrys' will dated June 17, 1594. He was buried three days later. The items were repeated nearly word for word in Margaret's will dated January 18, 1595. Margaret was buried February 15 of that year, just seven months after her husband's death. In Thomas Harrys will, he left 10 shillings each to Thomas Savage (Jr.) and John Savage to pay off debts. And in Margaret's will in 1595 she left "Mr John Savadge of Ladbrooke and his children, 4 stryke of barlie." A stryke was about a half bushel.

The book described the Harrys family with some interest because the wills in the Banbury Peculiar (which meant free and exempt from church authority) Court from 1591 to 1620 showed several generations of Harrys family activity. In addition to the inventory of household and farm goods listed in both the husband and wife's wills in 1594 and 1595, mention is made of Margaret generously giving clothing and woven materials to six people, including two servants.

Some detective work conducted by the researcher who compared household goods from the Harrys wills of June and January showed how a 16th-century farm household functioned. A half-crown's worth of seacoal that Thomas left in the "howse" (or hall) was gone, probably burned, by the time Margaret died. Also, when Thomas died the crops had been planted but not harvested, so the supplies of maslin, barley, pease and hay were valued at only 9 pounds, 6 shillings, and 8 pence. The harvest must have been good that year, since Margaret left 19 pounds, 5 shillings, and 8 pence worth of corn, unthreshed maslin, wheat, barley and pease and a good supply of maslin seed, seed barley and pease seed, and still one pound of hay. Six of Thomas's eight hens, his drake and four ducks were gone, probably killed and eaten, and the number of pigs wasn't the same, proving the farm had remained active.

As for the Savage family, precise information linking precisely who was who was scant, but there were many people named Savage in Banbury Hundred. Oliver Savage was a Deputy Registrar of Wills from 1605-1608 in the Commissary of the Banbury Peculiar Court. There was a widow named Elizabeth Savage who had married William Garland October 16, 1580. William Garland died and was buried April 7, 1607, and the twice-widowed Elizabeth (Savage) Garland was buried December 9, 1610. William Savidge took inventory on behalf of the court in 1618 on the goods and estate of

Isabel Harris, who was buried on May 18 of that year. The will took note that Isabel Harris was married to Thomas Harris, the son of Thomas Harrys mentioned earlier, and therefore probably a stepbrother to Thomas, Bennet and John Savage.



Buoyed by finding this evidence of the family's life in the Banbury Hundred, I later devoured the histories to find out more. Those stories painted a more complete picture of the community my ancestors had left. Like tales from later generations from other countries, these original English left war, poverty and religious turmoil when they came to the New World.

Banbury, located 22 miles north of Oxford on the River Cherwell, is close to the intersection of three countries: Oxford, Warwick to the west and Northampton to the east. The town grew up at the junction of ancient roads, Salt Way and Banbury Lane. Salt Way crossed along a prehistoric east/west route along a limestone ridge that divided the Thames Basin from the Midland Plain. Banbury Lane, which followed the ridge from Northampton to Banbury, also had prehistoric origins crossing the Cherwell River in Banbury and continuing southwest to the Cotswolds.

There were early Celtic and Roman settlements in the Banbury area. Not far from Salt Way is an area called Crouch Hill, named after Celtic word "crug," or hill. Relics from archaeological digs prove that the area was well populated in prehistoric times. An area called Wykham nearby was Romanized in 250 AD. Wykham takes its name from Wic, which is derived from the Latin word "vicus" for village or settlement, and "ham," the Saxon word for the same thing. The invading Saxons from Germanic Northern Europe came to Britain, conquered the area just to Banbury's south in the late 400s AD. The Britons' combat victory against the Saxons in the battle of Mons Badonicus occurred nearby sometime between 490 and 516 AD, when the Britons ended the Saxons' northern advance.

The origin of Banbury's name is Saxon; Ban(n)a is a Saxon personal name; burh means borough, or earthen wall, stockaded area or ditch, which signifies a settlement of significance. The Saxons were converted to Christianity after 634 AD when Bishop Birinus came from Rome to Wessex. The next year, the West Saxon King Cynegils was baptized at Dorchester, a deserted Roman town, which the king gave to Bishop Birinus as a gift.

The Bishop of Dorchester later acquired Oxford, including all the land later forming what was called Banbury Hundred. A "Hundred" was a characteristic of the Tribal Hidage system, which predated manors, and was drawn up between 617 and 633. All of England was divided into districts, each of which was assessed a certain number of animal hides, in multiples of a hundred, on which the tribute or tax to be paid the king was estimated.

Oxfordshire contained 22 “hundreds” of which all but three lay inside the Royal Manor. The three that lay outside were Banbury, Dorchester and Thame, which were in the hands of the Bishop of Dorchester. In effect this meant that residents of Banbury Hundred paid tribute (tax) to the Bishop not the King.

Vikings the Britons called Danes invaded sometime after Easter in 913, ravaging northern Oxfordshire and leaving Banbury and the other villages along the main thoroughfares in burned ruins and the people scattered, the victims of rape and slaughter. But the Danes, as they did throughout England and Ireland, came to trade, too. In time a regular market grew at the intersection of Salt Way and Banbury Lane in the traditional Norse version of the V-shaped or triangular market.

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, the bishop moved his headquarters from Dorchester to Lincoln. Banbury became the property of the Bishop of Lincoln. By 1086 Banbury was one of the administrative centers of the bishop’s estate, and had become an ecclesiastical center for a wide area, a religious role it kept no matter which rite was the fashion of the day. The villages and hamlets of Banbury, Neithrop, Hardwick, Calthorpe, Easington, Wykham, Grimsbury and Nethercote all formed the parish of Banbury.

Claydon, home area to some of my ancestors, was added to the Banbury Hundred later.

Genealogies I’d read in America concluded that members of the Boardman and Savage families came from the section of Banbury Hundred called Clayton, a 1,199-acre hamlet located north of Banbury town on the northern tip of the Oxford county. At Clayton’s northern tip was the Three Shire Stone, where the boundary of Oxford intersected with the boundary for Warwickshire and the boundary for Northamptonshire. Clayton, which was first recorded in 1109, was built on a clay hill and there was no stream in the area.

Banbury Hundred’s economic history shows that Clayton enjoyed modest prosperity through the 14th and 15th centuries, with taxes being paid at about the same level as for other areas. By comparison with other hamlets, Clayton was modest, if not poor. By the 16th century, however, things began to change. In 1523 only eight persons were assessed 10 shillings, 9 pence, seven of them on goods and one at the landless laborer’s rate of 4 pence. The records for the 1665 hearth tax (a kind of energy-use tax) show that 12 people were assessed on a total of 17 fireplaces, and 8 people paid no tax on their 11 fireplaces because they were so poor. No one in Clayton paid taxes on more than one fireplace.

Claydon had only 57 inhabitants 18 years old or older who took the Protestation Oath in 1642 (a statement of fidelity during the Civil War), and the population couldn’t have been more than it was in 1801 when the

census put the population at 235. Mostly, however, Claydon's history is largely one of obscurity and poverty. One writer in the mid-19th century described Claydon as "a most neglected poverty-stricken place, notorious in the county for the numbers it sends to (jail)."

The Banbury area entered the modern world when the Norman, Bishop Alexander (who served from 1123 to 1148), built a castle there. Tradesmen, artisans and craftsmen set up shops around the castle. The town prospered, plots were taken, markets and fairs developed, and trading connections established over a wide area, in outer English towns and as far away as Wales and Ireland. The Banbury Market was thriving by 1155, when Henry II granted it a charter.

The Oxfordshire section of Banbury was divided into four fields: Wykham well to the south, Hardwick well to the north, and, closer to town, Neithrop north of town and Broughton Road, and Calthorpe, a quarter mile south of Banbury church. Calthorpe took its name from the Old English word "coll," meaning hill or upper, while "tor" was Celtic for village and Neithrop was the "nether," or lower, village.

The market met every Thursday. During the Era of Fairs in the 13th century, the first fair was on the Vigil & Day of Our Lord's Ascension (Holy Thursday Fair), and other fairs occurred the Thursday and Friday of Whitsun week. Banbury became a center for the South Midlands' growing wool trade; written records show wool mentioned in 1286, brewing in 1320-30, and cheese mentioned in 1430. Shakespeare mentions Banbury cheese in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Banbury cakes were first mentioned in 1586.

The population in the 13th century was about 1,300. The poll tax rolls of 1377-80 show that plagues depopulated the area, indicating that there were only 523 inhabitants over 14 years old. By 1441, the population returned to about 1,600 and the bishop's rents listed 297 tenants and 52 other properties in the borough. By 1545, Banbury had 1,400 communicants in the parish.

The themes that ran through the writings about Banbury focused on the commercial nature of the market, its cheeses, ales and Banbury cake, the religious fervor, as well as a decided independence (perhaps even prickliness of mind) among the people.

The resistance among Banbury people was directed at authorities from afar, whose habit was to invade, appropriate property and tax, and who perceived themselves to hold authority to which the people of Banbury should submit. Many communities in England shared that experience. The Middle Ages were violent and lawless. Edward III in 1337, on the eve of the Hundred Years' War with France, raised money by taxing the wool trade in Banbury. Residents didn't like that. In 1387, Banbury troops from nearby noblemen's armies were quartered in Banbury homes when they arrived to check the advance of Robert de Vere, the Duke of Ireland, before the confrontation at

Radcot Bridge. In 1413, Banbury men were pressed into the fighting in the Lollard uprising.

In July 1469, a key battle in the War of the Roses between the Lancaster and York forces would occur six miles northeast of Banbury. The Yorkist Earl of Pembroke had moved into Banbury Hundred with a Royalist force of 8,000 men from Wales to join forces with Lord Stafford, the Earl of Devon, who led a body of some 5,000 archers. These armies were quartered in Banbury homes, whether the residents liked it or not. Pembroke and Stafford themselves were to be quartered in Banbury, but Pembroke wouldn't let Stafford stay at the inn where he was staying. Insulted, Stafford withdrew his whole company of 5,000 archers, leaving Pembroke to do battle with the rebels alone. The conflict occurred on July 26 at Danesmoor near Trafford Bridge, in Northamptonshire six miles northeast of Banbury. There the Lancastrian army led by "Robin of Redesdale" defeated the Pembroke's Yorkist army. Pembroke was captured and brought to Banbury, where he and 10 of his commanders were beheaded on the church's front porch.

Most historians set the end of Middle Ages in England as 1485, when Richard III lost his crown on Bosworth Field and Henry Tudor inaugurated a new era. But in Banbury the end of the era came in 1547 when Henry Holbech, Bishop of Lincoln, surrendered the manor and castle of Banbury to the crown in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. In a matter of a few years, Banbury Manor and Hundred also went to the crown and all were eventually leased by Queen Elizabeth to the Fiennes family of nearby Broughton Castle.

In 1554 Queen Mary granted the town a charter and a Common Council ruled the borough thereafter. In this and subsequent charters the powerful landed lords from a few families maintained their grip on the Common Council, which held all municipal authority as well as naming representatives in Parliament.

Since before the times of Alexander, the Norman Bishop, Banbury had been a religious center. A reading of the histories illustrates that in their own times Catholics, Anglicans, Puritans, Quakers, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and Unitarians all had their devoted adherents and pockets of faithful in Banbury, but each also had mortal enemies who felt empowered to act out fierce hatreds. But the Puritans and the role they played in the English Civil War in the 17th century continued to set Banbury apart.

Probably the earliest and best-known Puritan was Thomas Bracebridge, an educated man who resigned his post at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1575 to become a Banbury schoolteacher. Six years later, at age 40, Bracebridge, a well-regarded speaker and preacher, became Vicar of Banbury on September 19, 1581. He would hold the post until 1590.

At that time, Banbury had been home to a weekly market for hundreds

of years and annual fairs, where many enjoyed the traditions of public assembly that had distinctly pagan roots. One of the favorites was the religious festival of the Earth Goddess, which was held every spring. In its earliest days, a young girl bedecked in leaves and flowers would ride around the fields on a horse to increase their fertility while a sacred tree was set up in the village. The procession, dancing and singing would follow the “goddess” on the horse as she rode through the field and then around the tree. With the arrival of Christianity some pagan elements of the ritual were taken away, and the May Day observance led to the Queen of the May celebration. The sacred tree was replaced by the Maypole.

To the Puritans all these pagan rituals were anti-Christian blasphemy. Vicar Bracebridge, with the support of many of the community’s prominent families, led the effort to destroy the Banbury Maypoles and all pagan remnants. Others in Oxfordshire, led by John Danvers of Calthorpe, Sheriff of Oxfordshire, thought the Puritans too extreme. A confrontation was inevitable. On May 20, 1589, the constable of Calthorpe and Neithrop was ordered by the Constable of Banbury Hundred to take down Maypoles in his district and suppress all Whitsun-Ales, May Games and Morris Dances. Danvers, as Sheriff of Oxford, ordered the Banbury Justices of the Peace to resist any riot in the destruction of the Maypoles. The dispute went to Oxford, where the conflict became the talk of the town while back in Banbury mobs settled the issue by destroying the Maypoles themselves. In reaction, Vicar Bracebridge’s opponents successfully had him removed from his post in 1590 as a non-conforming Puritan. Though he had the support of 95 Banburyites who petitioned to have him reinstated, Bracebridge never got his job back. He died three years later.

In 1600, the Puritans’ continued resistance to icons and pagan rites targeted the public Banbury Crosses, called the Bread Cross and the High Cross that were on prominent display in town. A later family lawsuit named Puritan William Knight and his family for fanning the passions of a mob that led to the destruction of the crosses. The High Cross was destroyed July 26, 1600, and the Bread Cross a few days earlier.

With the sophisticated elites in Oxford and London watching this Puritan wrath, Banbury earned a reputation. First was the destruction of the Maypole, then the Crosses and now abolition of the May festival. Before the Puritan agitation, Banbury had become the archetypal English country town, known for its market, its cheese, ale, and the Banbury Cake. But Banbury was now also perhaps a bit stuffy, too, and the butt of jokes from the fashionable set from Oxford, particularly for the religious zeal of some of its most important citizens.

The most celebrated Puritan of his time was William Whateley, Banbury Vicar from 1610 to 1639, a one-time student at Oxford, well-educated and

from a prominent Banbury family. In Oxford and London he was called the “Roaring Boy of Banbury.”

In the book *Britannia*, published in 1610, where Banbury had once been noted in previous editions for Cheese, Cakes, and Ale, it was now known for Cheese, Cakes, and Zeal. Other popular writings were those of Ben Jonson, the London poet and dramatist who lived from 1573 to 1637. Jonson studied at Oxford and often visited the Banbury market where sheep and cattle from the surrounding countryside and as far as Westmoreland and Yorkshire were driven along Oxfordshire roads for sale at Banbury Fair or Banbury Market. In 1614, when Jonson’s comedy “Bartholomew Fair” came out, most knew he was talking about Banbury. In the play the phrase “Banbury man” or “a Banbury brother” was used in a sneering way to describe any Puritan. In describing a Banbury Cake, Jonson also got in a comment about the Puritan baker who no longer sold his cakes at the festivals because they were too steeped in pagan traditions.

In 1616, Richard Braithwait wrote in *Barnabee’s Journal*:

*To Banbery came I, O prophane one!  
Where I saw a Puritane one  
Hanging of his cat on Monday  
For killing of a mouse on Sunday.*

This joke was given wide circulation as evidence of how silly things could get if Puritan rules about the Sabbath were taken to extremes. But Puritan orneriness did help create the atmosphere that would poison relations between the crown and Parliament and frustrated the crown’s tax raising efforts. In 1627, Banbury leaders refused to pay a forced loan required by the government. William Knight and his son, Bezaleel, of the Banbury Common Council were called to the Privy Council in London and required to stay there until the loan was paid. They were held for nearly a month until the Privy Council adjourned, amid charges of government abuse and arbitrariness.

The Banbury Puritans’ political leader was William Fiennes, the Viscount Saye & Sele, of Broughton (1582–1662), who refused to pay the forced loan. The Fiennes family had held the lease on the Banbury Castle, Manor and Hundred since 1563 and were among the most distinguished families of the day. In 1628 Lord Saye & Sele’s opposition to paying taxes to London for the king’s ventures was so strong, the king and his councilors ordered soldiers to Banbury to raise the funds by force if necessary.

The king’s soldiers arrived in Banbury in February. On March 1 the Privy Council ordered Banbury authorities to house and feed the troops in Banbury and raise money for their maintenance despite “the refractory humours of some ill-affected persons.” The next morning, Sunday, March 2, a fire broke out in a Banbury malt-kiln, used in the brewing of ale, and one third of the

town was destroyed by the resulting fire. No lives were lost, but a brisk wind intensified the flames, which wound up destroying 103 dwellings and 660 bays of other buildings, including 20 malt-kilns.

At the time of the fire, most of Banbury's leading citizens were in church, and most stayed inside at the urging of Vicar Whateley, protecting them from injury. Two days after the fire Whateley said the malt house and all liquor's works were to blame. Whateley argued that all one needed for proof were the circumstances: the fire started in a malt-kiln, 20 kilns were destroyed, yet there was no loss of life. As far as the Puritan Vicar was concerned this was judgment and deliverance from Providence.

Others saw there was more to be gained by blaming the Banbury fire on the king's troops and their tax-raising mission. A later investigation by authorities said the fire probably started in a malt house due to the negligence of a maid. Hearings were held in Oxford and London, but nothing was ever resolved and the taxes were never raised to the crown's satisfaction.

Later, Charles I tried to raise money to build his fleet to counter the Dutch Navy. In 1634, he levied writs on counties with seaports in them to pay for ships. He didn't get the money he needed, so the next year he ordered inland counties to raise money, too. This tax, known as Ship Money, as expected had trouble in Banbury, which was obliged to raise 40 pounds of Oxfordshire's 3,500 pounds. There was no way Banburyians would pay. The dispute went on for several years. The 1635 fee was still unpaid in May 1639, in addition to 1636 and 1637 levies, which were also ignored.

The leader of the resistance in the Banbury area was William Fiennes, the Viscount Saye & Sele, who was known as the "godfather of the Puritan party." Puritan meetings were held continually in the Council Chamber on the roof of his Broughton Castle near Banbury. His first son, James, sat for Oxford in the Parliament, and his second son, Nathaniel, sat for Banbury. Lord Saye & Sele, as the holder of the lease on Banbury Castle, Manor and Hundred, sat in the House of Lords.

Lord Saye & Sele and his Puritan colleague Lord Brook from Warwick Castle in Warwickshire were playing a cunning game at court. In 1632, Lord Saye & Sele and Lord Brook obtained a license from their friend, the Earl of Warwick, then a proprietor of the New England Company. The license, called "The Warwick Patent" gave its proprietors permission to establish a plantation in the territory now called Connecticut. In July 1635, Lord Saye & Sele and Lord Brook appointed John Winthrop Jr., the son of the Massachusetts Bay governor, as their emissary in the establishment of their plantation on the Connecticut River. Winthrop and his company founded Saybrook and made preparations for the new plantation in case Lord Saye & Sele, Lord Brook and the other Puritans felt it necessary to leave.

As the lords laid these plans, however, many residents in Banbury

Hundred considered emigration. And it was these Warwick settlements in Connecticut, which would attract so many from Banbury Hundred, including the Boreman, Betts and Savage emigrants. “The Warwick Patent” was the foundation for Connecticut’s independence when Saybrook and Hartford and the other River towns merged to form a unified Colony after Charles II became king upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. On February 5, 1641, Julian Carter Borman in Claydon wrote to her son:

*To hervery lovinge Sonne Samuel Boreman at Ipswich in New England  
give this with Trust*

*Good Sonne*

*I have received your letter whereby I understand you are in good health  
for which I give God thanks as we are all praysed be God for the same:  
whereas your desire is to see your brother Christopher with you he is not  
provided for so great a Journey neither doe I thinke that he dare take  
uppon him so dangerouse a voyage your Five Sisters are all alive & in  
good health & remember their loves to you your Father hath been dead  
allmost this two yeares & thus troubling you noe further at this time I rest  
praying to God to blesse you and your wife unto whome we all kindly  
remember our loves*

*your ever loveinge*

*Mother*

*Julian Borman*

Samuel Boreman received this letter from his mother five years later, at his home in Wethersfield. However, as the letter crossed the English countryside and the Atlantic, matters were moving toward an armed conflict. Parliament placed Lord Saye & Sele in charge of the Oxfordshire Militia. The first armed encounter occurred in July 1642, when Lord Brook, the parliamentary commander of the Warwick Militia, went to Banbury to get six large cannons that had just arrived in Banbury and which Brook had been told he could use to fortify Warwick Castle. On July 29, Lord Brook arrived at Banbury Castle with 100 men to pick up the weapons. They started their return journey at 9 a.m., but four miles out of town they were stopped by the Royalist force of nearly 200 calvarymen and 200 men armed with muskets and pikes, led by Spencer Compton, the Earl of Northampton and the king’s commissioner for Warwickshire.

Instead of fighting, Brook and Compton agreed the cannons would be returned to Banbury Castle. Both agreed to give the other three days’ notice if they intended to change the situation. This truce was just a respite. Both sides knew a fight was imminent and began to get ready. Banbury prepared the roads and built earthworks and dug harrows. On August 4, 1,500 men supporting Parliament came from Northamptonshire to help and were given

a feast by Colonel John Fiennes. Another group left Buckinghamshire to join in but were turned back by a squad of Cavaliers. On Sunday, August 7, Royalist guns were played atop Crouch Hill overlooking the town. The battle was being set. All day Sunday Banbury townspeople fled to seek shelter in the countryside hamlets of Hardwick, Wykham, Calthrope and Neithrope. For all their preparation, however, the parliamentary holders of Banbury Castle could not commit to battle. When a Royalist force of some 600 cavalry entered town Monday and ordered the castle to surrender its six cannons, the parliamentary forces inside did just that. The Royalists then brought the arms to the Earl of Northampton's house, Compton Wynyates.

Preparations for war continued. The Fiennes of Broughton Castle began raising troops. Lord Saye & Sele raised 1,200 infantry, called Blue Coats. His sons, Nathaniel and John, and their cousin Francis, the son of James Fiennes, each raised a calvary of 60 horse each. In October, a huge store of money from Banbury was brought to the Guildhall in London for the Parliament's use.

On Saturday, October 22, the king's army was between Edgcote and Cropredy. At a council of war at Edgcote House, the Royalists decided that a brigade under the command of Sir Nicholas Byron would take Banbury Castle, then held by Earl of Peterborough's regiment of 600. The total parliamentary contingent holding Banbury Castle was now at 800 infantry and some calvary.

When the king learned that a parliamentary army was at Kineton in Warwickshire, however, the assault on Banbury was called off. Instead, he ordered his whole army to rendezvous at Edgehill on Sunday, October 23, eight miles northwest of Banbury. There the first great battle of the English Civil War was fought, without victory. The next morning the two armies stood across from each other, battered and bloodied but intact.

The king moved to high ground nearby, saw Banbury and ordered his forces to take Banbury Castle. When the garrison at the castle at first refused to surrender, Sir Nicholas Bryon's brigade was brought up on October 27 and stood outside. What happened next is hard to say. Some say nothing. Others say the castle's defenders gave up after one shot. Others say that Sir William Compton, son of the Earl of Northampton, led three assaults on the castle. Whatever happened, the entire garrison surrendered, the castle was turned over to the king and half of the men swore allegiance and signed up in the king's army.

Banbury Castle, built by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, remained the property of the Roman Catholic Church until 1547 when the crown took it away. In 1563, the castle and Banbury Hundred were leased to the Fiennes family. Banbury Castle was of the motte and bailey type and occupied about 11 acres with an open area of about three-quarters of an acre within an inner wall.

Now that the castle was firmly in the hands of the king, it became a royal fortress, which it remained for next three and half years, all under the control of the Compton family. Residents of Banbury, whatever their sympathies, had to house and feed several hundred Royalist troops in town dwellings.

The king placed the garrison at Banbury Castle under the command of William Compton, the 18-year-old son of the Earl of Northampton, Spencer Compton. On March 19, 1643, the earl was killed at Hopton Heath. His eldest son, James, succeeded his father in the earldom and the command of Banbury and the castle remained in the charge of William. Another notable local killed in 1643 was Lord Brook, the Parliamentarian from Warwick Castle and longtime ally of Lord Saye & Sele, who was killed at Litchfield on March 2.

During 1643 and 1644, constant turmoil wracked the town and countryside. Raids in the countryside were an ever-present threat, and the market town of Banbury was being taken over by soldiers with all that implied. In July of 1644, Banbury entered its worst phase when the Parliamentary armies began a siege to retake Banbury Castle. The Parliamentarians under Lord Saye & Sele's son, Colonel Fiennes, took over Banbury Church, near the castle, and turned it into a fortress. The first month they set up earthworks around the castle in Market Place. Guns were put in the church steeple. In August the siege and bombardment began; creating an artillery and siege war. The castle returned fire and in time more than 30 homes nearby had been destroyed. Cannons fired point blank at the stonewalls and doors. The walls of the castle were being pulverized. Miners began picking away at the foundations. Some armed assaults were beaten back by the castle's defenders who ventured outside to cut down the attackers. Miners succeeded in taking apart a retaining wall and drained the moat dry. Finally the castle was attacked in five places at once but to no avail, and in late September a truce was called to bury the dead.

The Parliamentarians had lost 300. Another 120 were captured by the castle's defenders, while the garrison had lost but nine. Royalist attempts to relieve the garrison on October 20 and 23 failed. But finally, the garrison was relieved October 25 when a Royalist army under Earl of Northampton arrived in Banbury and dispersed the Parliamentary armies. Colonel Fiennes escaped to Warwick.

After the Siege of Banbury in 1644, 100 men worked to dig a new moat and repair the damage to the castle. Within two years, it was put back in shape. Inhabitants left Banbury during the early stages because of the war's devastating impact. Crops were destroyed, homes burned, soldiers seized property for living quarters and space. Residents were harassed, robbed, raped, killed and otherwise subjected to the kind of intimidation and fear that men-at-arms have wrought since time began.

In 1643, fire burned between 100 and 200 dwellings. During the siege at Banbury Castle in 1644, some 30 houses near the castle were burned. Looting and burning by Royalists was common. Between 1632 and 1641, burials rose from 73 to 254 a year, 299 in 1644, 212 in 1645. Burials of soldiers totaled 59 in 1643, 33 in 1644, 40 in 1645. Epidemics were reported between 1643 and 1645; between March and November 1644 alone, 161 died of the plague. Between July and October 1644, at the height of the siege, the town government stopped working. Death came from treachery, too. Townspeople suspected as spies were executed. Then, as people left Banbury because of the conflict, records show that only 31 died in the first six months of 1646, with a further drop to 26 for all of 1647 and 30 in 1648. The average between 1647 and 1652 was 43.

In 1646, town government was restored by Parliament. On January 23, 1646, Col. Edward Whalley came to town with his 1,200 troops from Northampton and Warwickshire and began the second siege of the castle, which was still defended by Sir William Compton and his garrison of 300. To protect themselves from attack by the castle's garrison, the besiegers built a trench around the castle. The siege lasted 15 weeks. On April 27 the castle defenders learned that Charles I had fled to Scotland. On May 8, with the arrival of Parliamentary mortars and heavy guns, the garrison troops led by Sir William and Sir Spencer Compton surrendered and were allowed to leave the area. By May 9 the Royalists were gone. Under the conditions of the surrender they left behind 500 muskets, dozens of pikes and arms, 12 barrels of gunpowder, and 10 cannons, among other armaments.

The town had been devastated. The castle, which still belonged to the Fiennes family, supporters of Parliament, was now an ugly reminder of war, and the townspeople needed material to rebuild. The population had fled and was at such a low level that, despite the presence of war and plague, there were only 26 registered deaths in 1647. That year, one account said, the town had "scarce the one half standing to the gaze on the ruins of the other." The market wasn't functioning and the people needed to rebuild. By May 1648, the demand for building materials was so great the House of Commons paid 2,000 pounds to Lord Saye & Sele and the Fiennes family and told the people of Banbury they could use the ruins of the castle to rebuild the town.

King Charles I was executed January 30, 1649. On May 2, 1661, Samuel Boreman in Wethersfield received a letter from his sister, Elizabeth, in London, who wrote on the end of Cromwell's reign and the crowning of Charles II. Wrote she:

*Charles 2 went through the city from the Tower of London to White Hall in a very greate state with all noble men and their attendants, which was a most glorious show and the next day he was crowned at Westminster, God be praised, we are all in Peace now, the Lord continue it to us.*

By 1685 all remains of Banbury Castle were gone. Today the castle site is covered by a bus station, a parking lot and the Castle Shopping Center, which was opened in May 1978 by the Duke of Gloucester.