

= Thomas Danforth =

Thomas Danforth (baptized November 20 , 1623 ? November 5 , 1699) was a politician , magistrate , and landowner in the Massachusetts Bay Colony . A conservative Puritan , he served for many years as one of the colony 's councilors and magistrates , generally leading opposition to attempts by the English kings to assert control over the colony . He accumulated land in the central part of the colony that eventually became a portion of Framingham , Massachusetts . His government roles included administration of territory in present @-@ day Maine that was purchased by the colony .

Danforth was a magistrate and leading figure in the colony at the time of the Salem witch trials , but did not sit on the Court of Oyer and Terminer . Despite this , he is inaccurately depicted in Arthur Miller 's play *The Crucible* and its movie adaptations as doing so . He is presented as a harsh and domineering judge , apparently conflated with William Stoughton , who is not even named in Miller 's play . In reality , Danforth is recorded as being critical of the conduct of the trials , and played a role in bringing them to an end .

= = Early life = =

Thomas Danforth was born in Framlingham , Suffolk , England , and baptized on November 20 , 1623 . He was the eldest son of Nicholas Danforth (1589 ? 1638) and Elizabeth Symmes (1596 ? 1629) . Danforth immigrated with his father , brothers Samuel and Jonathan , and sisters Anna , Elizabeth , and Lydia to New England in 1634 , probably aboard the *Griffin* . The family , along with the 200 or so other passengers aboard , left England to escape persecution for their Puritan beliefs . William Laud had become archbishop of the Church of England in 1633 and begun a crackdown on Nonconformist religious practices (such as those practiced by the more Calvinist Puritans) that prompted a wave of migration to the New World .

= = Public service = =

Soon after his arrival in the Massachusetts Bay Colony Nicholas Danforth acquired property in Cambridge , becoming one of the town 's leading citizens and a member of the colony 's general court (as its assembly was known) . He died in 1638 , leaving his lands and the care of his younger children to Thomas . In 1643 Danforth was admitted a freeman of the colony , which conferred on him the right to vote and to participate in the colony 's political affairs .

He was appointed Treasurer of Harvard College in its charter of 1650 , and served as a steward of the college from 1669 to 1682 . From 1659 he sat on the colony 's council of assistants , and was elected deputy governor in 1679 . In 1665 Danforth was member of a commission that oversaw the extension of Massachusetts colonial authority over the territories of what is now southern Maine , which colonial surveyors had determined to fall within its borders .

Danforth 's politics and religion were relatively conservative , with one historian describing him as " the Pym of Massachusetts politics " . In 1661 the colony was rebuked by King Charles II for its mistreatment of Quakers ; the colonial government had banned Quakers from its territory under threat of death , and four of them had recently been hanged after repeatedly violating the ban . The king in his letter demanded that the colony allow Quakers and others freedom of religious expression . Danforth was one member of a committee that was established to formulate a response . The document the committee drafted was a conservative declaration that the colonial government was essentially sovereign except where its laws conflicted with English law . (By the time the king 's letter arrived the colonial government had already lessened the harsh punishments for violating bans .) Two committee members , magistrate Simon Bradstreet and minister John Norton , were sent to England to argue the colony 's case .

When King Philip 's War broke out in 1675 (pitting many Native American tribes of southern New England against English colonists) , Danforth was involved in some of the events of the war . Many colonists distrusted the Praying Indians (Christianized Indians living peacefully in communities on

the outskirts of English towns) , some of whom were attacked by mobs of English settlers seeking revenge for attacks on their communities . Danforth , along with Daniel Gookin and the Indian missionary Reverend John Eliot , was a vocal supporter of the Praying Indians , and worked to prevent some of these excesses , at some personal risk . In one notable instance Danforth was aboard a small boat with other colonial officials in Boston Harbor en route to Long Island to inspect facilities for Praying Indians who had been relocated their " for their own safety " when a nearby ship apparently intentionally rammed the smaller vessel . No one was injured in the incident , but all of the older officials were dunked in the cold waters of the harbor .

In 1680 Danforth was chosen president in the District of Maine by the Massachusetts assembly . The colony had previously governed this territory (roughly the land between the Piscataqua and Kennebec Rivers in what is now southwestern Maine) , but its right to do so had been stripped by King Charles after protests by the heirs of Sir Ferdinando Gorges , who had long @-@ standing claims to the area . Agents for Massachusetts then purchased the territory from the Gorges heirs , and Danforth was appointed to administer it . The territory had been devastated and many properties abandoned during King Philip 's War , and Danforth acted in effect as a Lord Proprietor , making land grants and reestablishing towns such as Falmouth and North Yarmouth . Danforth was rewarded by the colony with a grant of an island in Casco Bay for this work , which he oversaw until 1686 .

Throughout the 1670s the Massachusetts leadership steadfastly refused to make changes to its administration that were demanded by King Charles . At the instigation of agent Edward Randolph , Charles made increasingly specific demands concerning freedom of religion and adherence to colonial trade regulations known as the Navigation Acts , and prepared to issue a quo warranto writ to demand the return of the colonial charter . Danforth was one of the leading opponents to making any accommodation to the king 's demands . The issue reached a peak in the 1684 election , in which Danforth stood for election as governor representing the hardline party . He was narrowly defeated by the more conciliatory Simon Bradstreet , but retained the post of deputy governor . The colony 's attempts at moderation were in vain ? the charter was formally annulled on June 18 , 1684 .

In 1686 King James II established the Dominion of New England as a new colonial entity to govern all of New England . He appointed Massachusetts native Joseph Dudley as its first governor ; he was replaced later that year by Sir Edmund Andros . Both Dudley and Andros excluded Danforth from their councils , given his opposition to crown authority . The dominion reign , which did not include an elected assembly , was extremely unpopular in Massachusetts for a variety of reasons . When the Glorious Revolution deposed James , Massachusetts Puritan leaders orchestrated an uprising and arrested Andros , Dudley , and other dominion officials . In the period between the dominion 's collapse and the establishment of the Province of Massachusetts Bay in 1692 , the old colonial government was temporarily reestablished , and Danforth resumed his offices .

= = = Salem trials = = =

In 1692 , Danforth was acting governor during the early months of the witch hysteria in Salem and his name appears once in the Salem court records as part of a council which observed the proceedings on April 11 @.@ but his involvement ended in May upon the arrival of Sir William Phips , the first royal governor under the new charter of the Province of Massachusetts Bay . Danforth was not assigned to the special Court of Oyer and Terminer that Phips established shortly thereafter , and he was opposed to the manner in which magistrate William Stoughton conducted the witch trials , which unconditionally accepted spectral evidence in its proceedings , and vigorously presumed the guilt of the accused . In a letter by Thomas Brattle in October 8 , 1692 , Danforth is described as among a select group of " several about the Bay , men for understanding , judgement and piety ... that do utterly condemn the said proceedings , and do freely deliver their judgment ... "

After the Court of Oyer and Terminer stopped sitting , a new Superior Court was created , and , in December 1692 , Stoughton was elected by the governor 's council to head the court , defeating Danforth by three votes . In early 1693 , Danforth sat on Superior Court sessions conducted by

Stoughton that continued to hear witchcraft cases , but without accepting spectral evidence . By this time the hysteria was dying down , and the court (sometimes with Danforth leading after Stoughton temporarily removed himself in protest at the ban on spectral evidence and other reforms imposed by Governor Phips . Danforth was sympathetic to the plight of individuals accused , relocating some of them to his lands west of Boston ; Salem End Road in Framingham is part of the area where they settled .

= = Family and property = =

Danforth married Mary Withington in 1644 . The couple had 12 children , but half of these died before the age of three . Danforth was survived by only three of the others . Danforth died in Cambridge on November 5 , 1699 .

In 1662 Danforth began to acquire land to the west of Boston by way of land grants by the Great and General Court } after general surveys conducted by Edmund Rice at the behest of the Court . Originally known as " Danforth 's Farm " , he began to refer to the estate as " Framingham " in the 1670s in honor of his birthplace . Although Danforth continued to reside in Cambridge , he developed these lands , which came to number 15 @, @ 000 acres (61 km²) , by issuing 999 year leases rather than selling parcels . By the 1690s a number of somewhat discontinuous communities existed on the land , which petitioned the state for incorporation . Objections were made to the earliest petition (of 1692) by Danforth , since it did not include all of his lands , and a number of subsequent petitions were objected to by neighboring communities . It was not until 1700 , after Danforth had died , that the town of Framingham was granted a charter . The town 's seal contains the words " Danforth 's Farm " in commemoration of this heritage .

Danforth , Maine is named in his honor . The Danforth Museum of Art , founded in 1975 , is located in Framingham .

= = Fictional character in The Crucible = =

In Arthur Miller 's play The Crucible , Danforth is depicted as the leading judicial figure overseeing the Salem trials . William Stoughton is not a character in the play , and Miller portrays Danforth as an honest but domineering and selfish judge , under whose authority many are imprisoned and sentenced to hang . When John Proctor , an accused , defies his authority at the end of the play by refusing to lie and sign a public confession saying that he is a witch and accusing others , he is mercilessly sentenced to hang . In an introduction to the play , Miller wrote that he had combined several persons and made other changes to the historical characters for dramatic purposes .

Miller also wrote the screenplay for the 1996 film version of the play , in which the name Danforth was retained (portrayed by actor Paul Scofield) as the principal judicial antagonist . In the 1957 film adaptation of the play , whose screenplay was written by Jean @-@ Paul Sartre , Danforth (portrayed by Raymond Rouleau , who also directed the picture) is portrayed the same way .