

John Pope (1740-1796) – Curer of Cancers

John Pope unsuccessfully treated Ebenezer Parkman's oldest daughter, Mary or Molly (Parkman) Forbes (1725-1776) for breast cancer. For more information on her illness, see the file for Mary or Molly Parkman.

On Pope, see Peter Benes, *For a Short Time Only: Itinerants and the Resurgence of Popular Culture in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 59, 77-78, 88-89, 264.

1773: Ezra Stiles reported that Judge Oliver “told us that his Wife had been last year cured of a Cancer in her Neck of 30 years standg by a young man Mr Pope of Boston. His remedy is a secret, but he explained the operation of it to Mr. Oliver in a philosophical Manner, though Mr. Pope is not a man of Letters nor does he make pretension to any other part of Medicine or Surgery....” Ezra Stiles, *Literary Diary*, 1:333 (Jan. 11, 1773).

1774: Pope John among Quakers in Boston:

“The Friends were never very numerous in this place. In the eleventh month, 1774, says our informant, ‘I was in Boston and visited every family, and took account of their names as follows: Eben’r Pope, John Pope, Sam’l Pope, Jas. Raymer, John Phillips, Eph. Silsbee, Nath’l Low, Ezra Collins, Ezra Curten, Daniel Silsbee, Josiah Gorham; these eleven were all the members belonging to Boston meeting of Friends. I was at a monthly meeting there, which was small; it was held alternately at Boston and Lynn or Salem; they were then in a declining state.’” Caleb H. Snow, *A History of Boston, the Metropolis of Massachusetts, from its Origin to the Present Period; with Some Account of the Environs* (2nd ed.; Boston: Abel Bowen, 1828), 200.

1776: “*THE Public are hereby informed, that JOHN POPE who of late Years hath been much noted in curing malignant ULCERS, and in-veterate CANCERS, having by Reason of the distressed Situation of the Town of Boston, his native Home, re-moved into the Country, now resides at Smithfield, near Woonsocket Falls, in Rhode-Island Government.*” *Providence Gazette*, July 6, 1776, p. 1.

1778: “JOHN POPE, who for many years hath been noted for curing malignant ulcers, inveterate cancers, &c. is removed from his late habitation, into Lincoln, at Humphry Farrar’s, and expects soon to fix himself in the south of Concord.” *The Continental Journal, and Weekly Advertiser* (Boston), Apr. 30, 1778 [p. 3].

1789: The 1789 *Boston Directory* describes John Pope as “school-master and surgeon, particularly a curer of cancers and malignant ulcers, &c.”

1800: *Certificates of Cures in Cancerous Cases, Performed by John Pope, of Providence, In the State of Rhode-Island, &c.* Providence: Bennett Wheeler, 1800. Evans 38342. This would have been John Pope, Jr. (1769-1806).

1772 May 23 (Saturday). Mr Moore being here also I recommended to them the Case of *Marlborough*, Mr. *Smith* being at *Boston* under the operations of Mr. *Pope* (a Quaker) for the Cure of his Cancer.

1775 January 10 (Tuesday). My Son *Forbes* and his Wife came from Cape Ann, but last from Mr. *Brooks's* at *Medford*.... My Daughters Trouble in her Breast somewhat mitigated, by Methods used by Friend *Pope* of *Boston*. Thanks to the Supreme Healer!

1775 March 13 (Monday). Mr. *Forbes* and my Daughter Set out on their Journey to *Boston*, designing to go to Mr. *Pope*, to consult him on her Sad Case, of her Breast.

1775 March 22 (Wednesday). A Second Letter from my Son *Forbes* at *Boston*, that his Wife has gone through a Second Dressing by the hard Plaister and "by appearance these two have en[crusted?] the Schirrous Tumor about 1/4 of an inch. This dead mass must be separated from the live Flesh by digestive lenient Dressings before another hard Dressing is applied: which will require a Week or ten Days."

1775 March 24 (Friday). Received another Letter from Mr. *Forbes*, dated the 20th (the Day before the last, which was the 21st) that "moment" whilst She was actually "under the painfull Operation of the 2d hard Plaister, and is as full of pain as She can well bear, though She endures (he writes) with more patience and fortitude than I feared. The Doctor says all Things work very kindly, and he doubts not with the Blessing of God he shall be able to effect a Cure: but will require some time, at least two Months. At present she is extremely agitated. Last Night she had no sleep, and this Night (Sabbath 2 o'Clock) She has been much worse -- but by the help of an Anodyne she gets a little sleep -- hope She will be supported and carryed through -- I am encouraged, but verily Sir, it is hard Work -- and we hope in God." "Six o'Clock in the Morning. We have got through the Night. It has been pritty distressing, though through the great Goodness of God mine and your dear *Molly* has had several refreshing Naps of Sleep, and is now Comfortable -- and does not expect to have any more of these hard Plaisters for a Week or ten Days, and I hope the worst is past. However, Sufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof."

1775 March 28 (Tuesday). Put up at Bracketts: hastened to Samuels to see Mrs. *Forbes*. She was under the lenient Plaister -- was calm and easy. I saw the sore dressed.

1775 March 29 (Wednesday). Mrs. *Forbes* has Comfort, and is cheerfull. We lodged there.

1775 April 15 (Saturday). A Letter from Mr. *Forbes* (by *Ripley*, who is come to us from *Boston* and *Cambridge*) that on the 13th the Remainder of the Cancer in my Daughters Breast came out in a *Body*, near of the Bigness and Shape of a Sheeps Kidney -- the Breast in an healing way. All Praise and Thanks to the glorious God our Healer!

1775 June 30 (Friday). My Daughter *Forbes* goes to *Mendon* in search of her Doctor, *Pope*: her Breast has Twinges, and she wants some of his [illegible] salve. *Ripley* attends upon her, but Mrs. *Baldwin* abides here with us.

1775 September 13 (Wednesday). [torn]ning attend the Funeral of Mrs. *Belknap* so far as to go to the [torn] pray there. My Son *Ebenezer* went with me. Mr. *Forbes* [torn] (having been to Dr. [Pope?]) at *Mendon* about her Breast) came, as did *William* [torn] and Daughter *Lydia*. *Alexander*, his Wife and

young Child -- *Samuel* with his [torn] -- Mr. *Whitney* came also and dined with us. Mr. *Stone* came [torn] before [the procession?]. The following young Men were Bearers [torn] *Uriah Brigham* [torn] *Thomas Stone*, *Benjamin* [Tainter?] junior, *Jonathan Fay*, *Samuel* [torn] and *Stephen Maynard*. Thus we go through the mournful work of [torn]ing our Dead.

1776 February 17 (Saturday). Mr. *Edwards Whipple* here. He has a Cancer on his Lip -- is going to *Mendon* to put himself under the Care of Dr. *Pope* -- and desires public prayers tomorrow for him.