

A. John Conant,¹ with whom the authentic genealogy of the family begins, lived in the parish of East Budleigh, Devonshire, England, but was probably born about the year 1520 at Gittisham, some ten or twelve miles north-east. The Life of Dr. John Conant, written about the year 1700, states that John Conant of East Budleigh "was descended from ingenuous parents of Gittisham, near Honiton, whose ancestors for many generations had been fixed here but were originally of French extraction." Gittisham (pronounced Gitsham) is a small parish on the river Otter, between Honiton and Ottery St. Mary, and about fourteen miles from Exeter, the capital city of the county. In Domesday Book the name appears as Gidesham. A Roman road passed through the parish, traces of which may still be seen.

In the 13th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1571), he was assessed for goods of the yearly value of £4.* In 1581 he was still taxed at East Budleigh, but in 1588 the tax was paid by his son, Richard, and it is probable that between these dates a transfer of property had taken place.

In 1577 John Conant and Edmond ffowler were church-wardens of East Budleigh. In those days the office of church-warden was of considerable importance, and only members of the leading families and such as were of recognized ability were elected to this important office.

John Conant was buried at East Budleigh, 30 Mch., 1596.† It is most unfortunate that many early Conant wills, proved in the court at Exeter, which might throw light on the ancestry of John Conant, are now missing. Although no legal evidence of the fact has yet been found, it seems likely that he was the

son of the John Conant who was buried at Gittisham 4 Sept., 1559.* In the 15th year of the reign of King Henry VIII. (1523), John Conant, senior, of Gittisham, was assessed for £7 in goods, and John Conant, junior, for £4 in goods.† The latter was perhaps the one who died in the year 1559.

In the Will Office at Exeter there is a copy of the will of John Connante, of Gittisham, dated 21 June, proved 20 Sept., 1586. The testator desires to be buried in Gittisham churchyard. He bequeaths his "cubborde" to Nicholas, his son, and his "table board" to John, his son; to Matthew, his son, he leaves a bed. The residue is left to Marie, his wife, who is sole executrix. Persons named Smith, Crabb, Turling and Vann are also mentioned. No record of the burial of this John is to be found in the Parish Registers of Gittisham, although careful search has been made. A Nicholas Conant was baptized at Gittisham in the year 1574; if he was the one mentioned in the will it indicates that the testator died before middle age. Or, if this was not the Nicholas of the will—and this is the only ground for supposing the testator died in middle age—it may be that the son John mentioned in the will was John Conant of East Budleigh, and the testator was the John Conant, junior, of the Subsidy Roll. In this case the testator must have died at an advanced age, say eighty-five or six years. And the burial of the John Conant in 1559 may be that of the John Conant, senior, mentioned in the Subsidy Roll in 1523.

The ancestry of John Conant, of East Budleigh, may never be established by legal evidence, but the fact that his parents lived in Gittisham, and the similarity of names, renders it probable that he was the son of the John Conant who was buried 1559, or the one who died 1586.