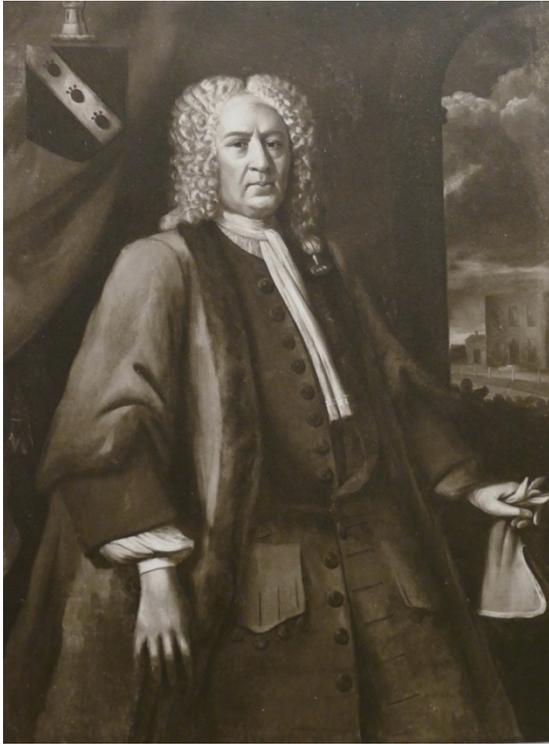


# Mayor of Portsmouth

John Vining 1659 - 1743  
Elizabeth Vining 1663 – 1709

## Mayor and merchant



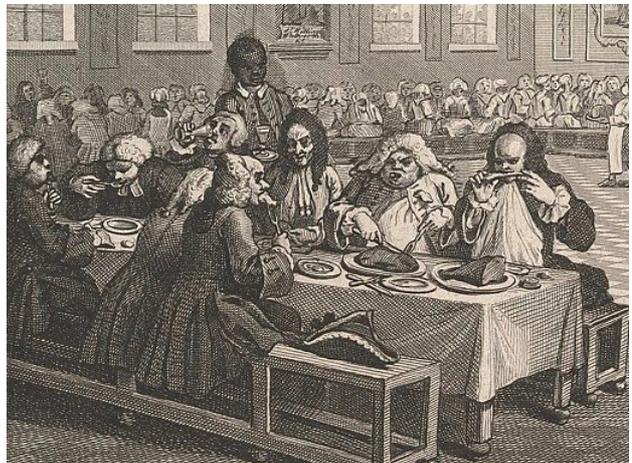
Portrait of John Vining as Mayor, date and artist unknown, painting now lost. Source: *The Family Papers of J.E.T. Rogers*

**John Vining**, born on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1659, was the second of four children of **William and Elizabeth Vining** of Portsmouth, Hampshire. John grew up to make his living as a wholesale merchant and contractor in Portsmouth. He was also active for many years in local town politics and became Mayor of Portsmouth six times (1701, 1704, 1707, 1715, 1722 and 1738), and was made an alderman as young as 31 years of age in 1690.<sup>1</sup>

Like all municipal leaders he was caught up in the politics of the time - ongoing antagonism between the Jacobites (who supported the catholic, Stuart line of monarchs who had not reigned since 1714) and Hanoverians (who supported the protestant, German, line of monarchs currently on the throne). John was thought to have secret Jacobite sympathies and was accused<sup>2</sup> of disloyalty to the Hanoverian Succession, but as an Anglican, he strenuously denied the accusation. John had also been accused of 'using improper influence for maintaining his party in power'.<sup>3</sup>

## Big spender

When conducting municipal banquets John Vining spared no expense. Bills for such feasts often totalling more than £6 (over A\$900 today) included such items as 48 bottles of wine, 24 quarts of beer, oysters, crabs, lobsters, prawns, anchovies, cheese, bread, butter, biscuits and tobacco. It seems his generosity ran out when it came to personal contributions to the community. His name is not present on the list of donors of Corporation Plate or charitable bequests to his home town.



*The Industrious Prentice grown rich and Sheriff of London* (detail) etching and engraving by William Hogarth 1747 Source:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/3>

The Corporation of Portsmouth in the May<sup>or</sup> 1739  
 of John Vining Esq<sup>r</sup> to Ric<sup>d</sup>: Clapham  
 30<sup>th</sup>: 8ber: 1739. The King's Birth Day.

For Forty Eight Bottles of Wine	4:16:0
Oysters	0:9:0
Biskett	0:3:6
Bread	0:2:0
Four Pounds of Butter at 8 <sup>th</sup> pound	0:0:0
Cheese	0:2:0
Twenty four Quarts of Beer	0:8:0
Tobacco	0:2:6
Nine Bottles of Bristol Water	0:3:9
Anchovies Three pounds	0:4:6
Crabbs	0:3:10
Glasses Broach	0:2:0
	<u>6:19:9</u>
Thirty Bottles of Wine	3:0:0
Twenty Quarts of Beer	0:6:8
Nine Bottles of Bristol water	0:3:9
Biskett	0:3:6
Bread	0:1:6
Cheese	0:1:6
Butter 4	0:2:8
Tobacco	0:2:0
Sugar	0:2:0
	<u>4:3:7</u>
	<u>6:19:9</u>
	<u>11:3:4</u>

Warranted by you was hereby directed to pay to Richard Clapham or Order the  
 Contents of the above Bill, and the same shall be allowed you  
 on paying your Acc<sup>t</sup>. Dated the 20<sup>th</sup> of Sept<sup>r</sup>: 1739.

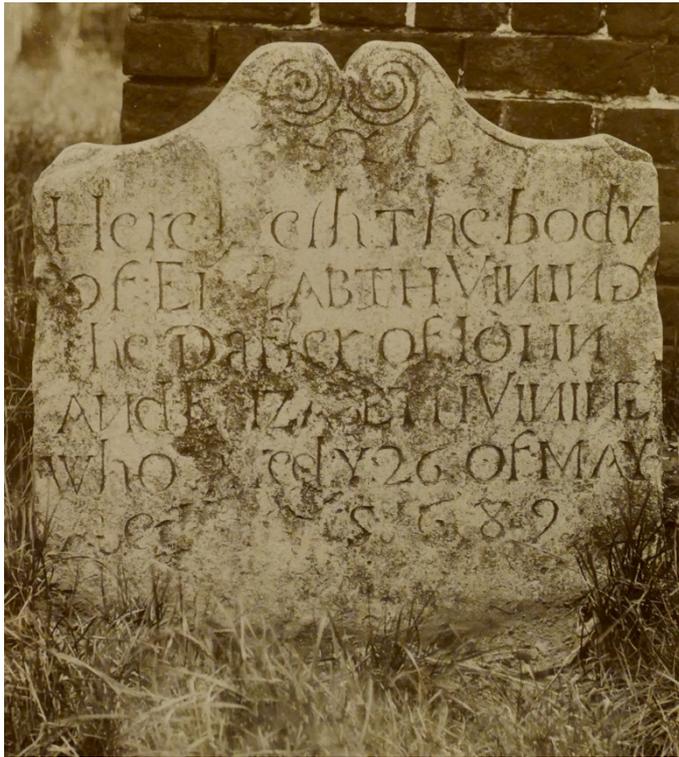
To W<sup>m</sup>: Hugh Green Chamberlain  
 of the Corp<sup>r</sup>:  
 John Vining Mayor

An invoice from Richard Clapham for a Mayoral banquet to celebrate the King's birthday in 1738, signed by John Vining, Mayor. Source: The Family Papers of J.E.T. Rogers

### Three wives and the Twining connection

John's first wife, our ancestor **Elizabeth** (maiden name unknown) produced three children: Mary (1684), Elizabeth (1686-89), and **Ann** (1692). She died at the age of 46 on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1709. Soon after John married Jane Wood. After Jane died, he married Elizabeth Longcroft who survived him by two years. This Elizabeth's brother Thomas Longcroft married John's sister or close relative<sup>4</sup> Mary Vining in 1713 at Portsmouth. Their great-great granddaughter was Louisa Twining (of the tea merchants), the founder of the Workhouse Visiting Society, a group of wealthy women who made it their mission to provide comfort and aid to infirm patients in the notorious London workhouses of the 1850s, also lobbying for qualified workhouse nurses. Louisa often worked alongside Dr Joseph Rogers who, as a

descendant of William Vining, was her fifth cousin (a fact of which they were probably unaware).



The grave of Elizabeth Vining, daughter of John and his first wife Elizabeth, who died in 1689. Grave was in St Thomas's Churchyard (now Portsmouth Cathedral), grave no longer in existence. Photo: Symonds & Co. Portsmouth c1902. Source: *The Family Papers of J.E.T. Rogers*

### Penny Street, Old Portsmouth



John Vining's house at 22 Penny Street in c1902. Being located close to the port of Portsmouth, it was destroyed with many others during the German bombing in WW2. Source: Rogers, Julian C. - *A History of Our Family (Rogers of Westmeon) 1451-1902* (1902)

John Vining lived and conducted his business from 22 Penny Street Portsmouth, which at one time extended down to Pembroke Street and northwards to High Street<sup>5</sup>. He became very wealthy chiefly through his contracts to provision the Navy, a very lucrative business due to England's continual maritime wars. He was also a land speculator and made great profits by reselling land to the government as sites for barracks and fortifications.



*The Town and Harbour of Portsmouth, c1740 engraving by unknown artist. Published in A System of Modern Geography, 1811. Source: <https://www.ancestryimages.com/>*

## New Town Hall

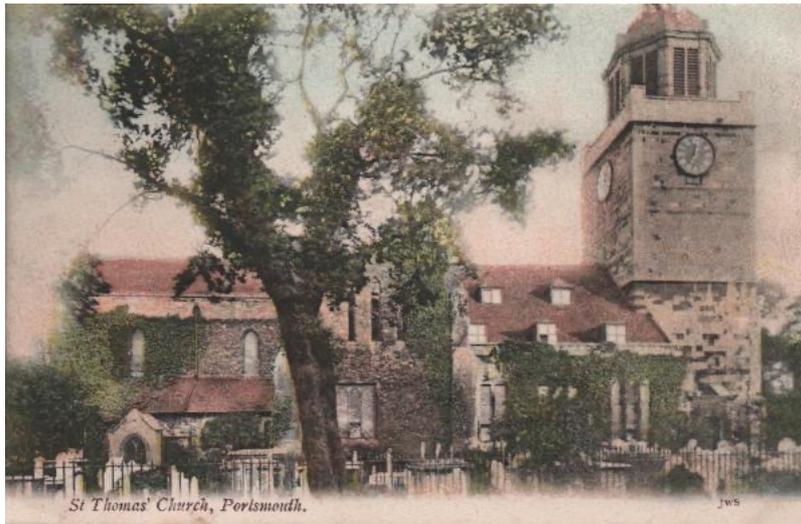
By 1736, the old town hall of Portsmouth, about 200 years old, was apparently in a very poor state and the town council was having to hold its meetings in Government House, a large residence used on many occasions for royalty as well as the local Governor. The Town Council decided it was time to demolish the old town hall and set out raising funds to build a new town hall. As mayor at the time, John Vining lay the foundation stone of the new building on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1739 for the new Portsmouth Town Hall. 'The building was plainly intended as a significant improvement on its predecessor, including as it did, "additional stucco work", Vases over the pilasters of the Portico, a carpet for the table and cushions for the Councillors.'<sup>16</sup>



*The Town Hall, High Street, with Aldermen and Councillors of the Corporation in Procession 1830 by R.H.C. Ubsdell. This town hall was demolished in 1836. Source: Portsmouth Museums and Visitor Services*

## Cathedral memorial

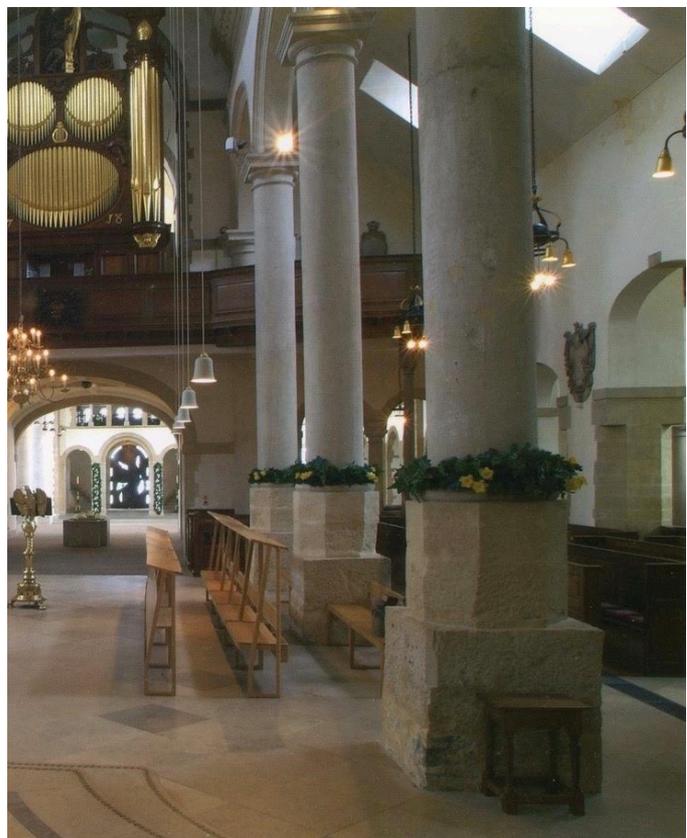
John Vining died at the age of 84 on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1743. His funeral included a torchlight procession followed by the town corporation. He was buried in his own vault opposite the north porch of St. Thomas' Church, now Portsmouth Cathedral. The vault adjoined the grave of his 3-year-old daughter Elizabeth. I don't believe these graves still exist but would have been demolished during 20th century extensions. However, in the church is a mural tablet in John Vining's memory on one of the southern piers in the Quire. The cherubs on the memorial were reproduced for display at one of the Great International Exhibitions.



St Thomas's Church (now Portsmouth Cathedral) early 1900s postcard. Prior to 20th century extensions the old graveyard is visible. Source: <http://apostcardaday.blogspot.com/2011/08/st-thomas-church-portsmouth.html>



Memorial plaque (above and right) to John and Elizabeth Vining in Portsmouth Cathedral. Photo: Euan McGillivray 2007



In Portsmouth Cathedral, looking west from the Quire. The Vining memorial can be seen on the wall on the right. Photo: RJL Smith. Source: *Portsmouth Cathedral* (2006)

## Setting a 'worthy' example

A letter to the editor from 'Civis' in the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* of May 17<sup>th</sup> 1856 laments the current standard of municipal leaders and begins by giving John Vining a glowing account:

**THE CORPORATION OF PORTSMOUTH.**

*To the* EDITOR *of the* HAMPSHIRE TELEGRAPH.

SIR,—There is a monument in the Church of St. Thomas, at Portsmouth, to the memory of John Vining, who, a century since, at the age of 84, was gathered to his fathers. This monument was erected by the Corporation of Portsmouth, recording that he was six times Mayor of his native town, and forms a just and appropriate tribute to the character of a man whose virtues had won the enduring esteem of his fellow citizens.— He was a merchant in the proper acceptation of the term; his ships traded to the far East; fortune favoured his lengthened career; wealth gathered at his feet; munificence was companion to personal aggrandisement; and at a ripe old age he passed to his account, and left an example worthy of imitation in after times.

## John's will

As well as money, John's very lengthy will shows he left vast amounts of property (land and buildings) to his wife, and grandchildren. Some of the property named included the farm *Inlands* in the parish of Westbourn in Sussex; houses in Portsmouth; houses, farm and lands at Wymering Southampton; property in the parish of Boldre near Lymington; buildings, farm and lands called *Seale* and *The Vinings* at Sandown on the Isle of Wight; farm and lands at Brockenhurst; and dwellings in Chapel Row West Dothfield in the parish of Portsea.



*The Vinings* on the Brading Road near Sandown on the Isle of Wight, one of John Vining's properties mentioned in his will. Photo: c1902  
Source: *The Family Papers of J.E.T. Rogers*

John's only children were by his first wife Elizabeth, and only two, Mary and Ann, survived to adulthood, married and had children. Apart from his wife, godson and nephew Robert Longcroft, and a cousin Susannah Wake[?], the main family legatees were his grandchildren. John's daughter, our ancestor Ann Vining, married Capt. **Patrick Heron** but died 10 years before her father. Shortly after, Patrick deserted his children and went to Nova Scotia. Fortunately, John was wealthy enough to be able to provide for all of their children. Those living at the time of his death in 1743 were: Jane (married her cousin John Vining Reade); John Vining Heron; Dr. Andrew Heron; Ann Heron (married John Elliott); **Elizabeth** (married **Richard Parry**); Patrick; Benjamin; Charles; and Mary.

His only other grandchild was the son of eldest daughter Mary Vining and Charles Reade, John Vining Reade, who married first cousin Jane Heron as mentioned above. They all did well out of their grandfather's will. Interestingly Mary is not mentioned in the will. Her husband Charles Reade is one of the trustees and executors.

### A kind heart

The will shows John's concern for his grandchildren's wellbeing. Mary Heron was born with clubfoot (Congenital talipes equinovarus) and John made special provisions for her in his will.<sup>7</sup> Her feelings for her grandfather are evident in her request to be buried in the family vault close to her grandfather.

It is interesting that John seems to feel the need to protect the interests of his granddaughters Ann Elliott and Elizabeth Parry. He specifically states in his will, that their inheritance was for their sole purpose alone and states for both of them that the legacy was 'not (to pass) into the hands or for the use or benefit of her said husband'<sup>8</sup> As it turned out, Elizabeth certainly needed her interests protected from her disreputable husband Capt. Richard Parry. She died only a few years after her grandfather and their daughter Elizabeth inherited her mother's residual share from John's will. Her father then went to court to try to take it from her, and fortunately failed. (This **Elizabeth** is our ancestor who married **William Rogers**.)



One of John Vining's granddaughters Ann Elliott (nee Heron) and her son John Vining Elliott c1748 artist unknown. John made sure Ann's husband, solicitor John Elliot, did not get hold of her inheritance. Source: Rogers, Julian C. - *A History of Our Family (Rogers of Westmeon) 1451-1902* (1902)

## Missing portrait

The portrait of John Vining in his mayoral robes (see top of story), once hung in the dining room of 22 Penny Street. It was later installed in *Woodlands* at Waterloo, near Portsmouth, a house belonging to Benjamin Elliott (s.o. John Vining Elliott). Later in 1947 it was given by Mrs E.R. Longcroft of Hall Place Havant, Hampshire to another descendant, Virginia Saunders White of Gates Mills, Ohio USA. Apparently, it deteriorated and was lost.

Ann Hurley

2020

See my story **Conduct Unbecoming** for more about his daughter Ann Vining.

[hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au](http://hurleyskidmorehistory.com.au)

Notes:

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Portsmouth Guildhall Council Chamber he is listed six times on Board 4 of the Mayors and Lord Mayors of Portsmouth (1531-2005) memorial <http://www.memorialsinportsmouth.co.uk/city-centre/mayors.htm>

<sup>2</sup> A Lieut. Governor of Portsmouth, Colonel Sir John Gibson, was his chief accuser.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, Julian C. - *A History of Our Family (Rogers of Westmeon) 1451-1902* p3

<sup>4</sup> Described by Julian Rogers as such but probably his half-sister or possibly a niece or cousin. I have found two birthdates for Mary Vining: 1653, from James Heron's Rootsweb page but does not fit with 1713 marriage that produced children; second date is 1686 but this record has the mother's name as Mary (not Elizabeth or Miriam). As I can't find a death date for William Vining, I can't be sure this is the right Mary Vining.

<sup>5</sup> Stated in his Will of 1740 he lived in High Street, Portsmouth

<sup>6</sup> The Town Halls of Portsmouth <http://historyinportsmouth.co.uk/places/town-hall.htm>  
Eventually, and despite further renovations, the town hall was demolished in 1836.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers, Julian C. - *A History of Our Family (Rogers of Westmeon) 1451-1902* p30 also Bertram M H Rogers noted that her bones were discovered in c1905 when some flooring repairs were being made to the church, revealing she had clubfoot *The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

<sup>8</sup> In his Will of 1740

Other resources:

Backhouse, Tim - *History In Portsmouth: People Places Events* (2020)  
<http://historyinportsmouth.co.uk/index.htm>

Boyd's Marriage Index 1538-1840

*British Newspaper Archive* (British Library)

---

*England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858* (Ancestry.com)

*England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538-1975* (Ancestry.com)

England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973 (Ancestry.com)

Fontana, Dr. Dominic - Old Portsmouth and the Cowdray Engraving (Department of Geography University of Portsmouth) <http://www.dominicfontana.co.uk/dominic/oldportsmouth/> (WW2 Map)

Phillips-Evans, James L. Longcroft descendant

*The Family Papers of J. E. T. Rogers* - The Bodleian Library, Oxford

*UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s-Current* (Ancestry.com)