

A Note from the Author: Andrea M Clarke

John Clarke - The Fight For Soul Liberty

History remembers many of the men who helped shape America and the world. Yet one of the most influential champions of Liberty of Conscience—religious liberty—has been largely forgotten. His name was Dr. John Clarke (1609 - 1676). As a direct descendant of Joseph Clarke, John's youngest brother, I am divinely driven to honor John's world-changing contributions by bringing his timely story to life through a historical fiction novel and feature film.

In 1637, 139 years before the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence risked their livelihoods to form the United States of America, Baptist Minister and Physician Dr. John Clarke, along with his young wife Elizabeth, set sail to New England from England to escape religious persecution under the King's rule. No sooner was John ashore in Boston that he was disarmed, banished in the dead of winter, arrested for holding an "unlawful worship service," thrown in jail, threatened with death by the Governor of Massachusetts, and sentenced to twenty lashes on the whipping post.

Elected Rhode Island's Agent of Record, John was well aware that sailing back to London in 1651 would place him directly into the Lion's Den. Facing insurmountable odds for something greater than himself, John's purpose was unwaveringly clear: to secure an autonomous government and full concernment in religious liberties for the Colony from the King of England, no matter the cost.

This was a tumultuous era in London. King Charles I had been executed two years earlier, with Lord Cromwell, "The Protector," dominating the new regime. In 1660, King Charles II returned to power and brutally hunted down the fifty-nine signers of his father's death warrant—a group known as the "Regicides."

John and his wife Elizabeth watched friends and allies imprisoned, banished, and put to death for the very causes he championed. How John survived these times, including his involvement with the Fifth Monarchists, is nothing short of miraculous—or what I came to believe was God's divine protection.

Referencing John's book *III Newes from New England*, his personal letters, and scores of historical research over the span of 12+ years, this inspirational story will bring you into Dr. John Clarke's world. You will walk through his journey to overcome religious persecution, loss of personal freedoms, and the risk of treason as a statesman and diplomat who stood before kings and Parliament to triumph in obtaining the 1663 Rhode

Island Charter. This document was the first written guarantee in the world protecting Freedom of Conscience and Rhode Island's right to form an autonomous government, directly influencing the ideals later reflected in the United States Constitution and the First Amendment.

The timeline and dates presented in this novel - John Clarke - The Fight For Soul Liberty - are grounded in documented historical records. My calling to tell John's story led me deep into the trenches of historical research, where much of what I found was fragmented, contradictory, or hidden along indirect paths. Where the historical record fell silent across the centuries, my gut-driven intuition, faith, prayer, and reasoned deduction guided the path forward.

While this novel is historical fiction, it is rooted in my sincerity to remain faithful to my ancestors, their individual character, deeply held convictions, and the known history that shaped Dr. John Clarke's remarkable life—as well as the many men, women, families, allies, and adversaries whose lives became interwoven with his own.

As his 8th-great-niece, this is how I came to understand Uncle John, my 8th-great-grandfather Joseph Clarke, and their family over the past fifteen years. The more I discovered about his unwavering faith and extraordinary courage, the more convinced I became that his story was far too important to remain hidden or misrepresented in the pages of history.

As a filmmaker, I developed and wrote the novel alongside a feature film screenplay as a way to engage and inspire people from around the world through the underlying message of John's convictions: Liberty of Conscience—Soul Liberty. A message that he and I share. His message is as timely today as it was nearly four centuries ago, and I believe his story deserves to be shared for generations yet to come.

Within the novel his story begins in July 1627, when John was just seventeen years old, inside St. Margaret's Church in Westhorpe, Suffolk—the church where generations of the Clarke family worshipped before him.

It is there that our journey begins.

~ Andrea M. Clarke — Author

8th-great-niece of Dr. John Clarke

8th-great-granddaughter of Joseph Clarke

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