

Legend suggests that before the construction of London Bridge in the tenth century a ferry existed here. Ferrying passengers across the River Thames was a lucrative trade. John Overs who, with his watermen and apprentices, kept the "traverse ferrie over the Thames", made such a good living that he was able to acquire a considerable estate on the south bank of the river.

John Overs, a notorious miser, devised a plan to save money. He would feign death, believing that his family and servants would fast out of respect and thereby save a day's provisions. However, when he carried out the plan, the servants were so overjoyed at his death that they began to feast and make merry. In a rage the old man leapt out of bed to the horror of his servant, one of whom picked up a broken oar and "thinking to kill the Devil at the first blow, actually struck out his brains".

The ferryman's distressed daughter Mary sent for her lover, who in haste to claim the inheritance fell from his horse and broke his neck. Mary was so overcome by these misfortunes that she devoted her inheritance to founding a convent into which she retreated.

This became the priory of Saint Mary Overie, Mary having been made a saint on account of her charity. During the Reformation the church of St. Mary Overie described as "a fair church called St. Mary over the Rie, that is over the water" was renamed St. Saviour's Church. In 1905 it became Southwark Cathedral and the Collegiate Church of St. Saviour and St. Mary Overie.

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