

The Narragansett Sun.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 1895

CHAPTER IV.

The Phippen Claim —, Saccarappa “Great Bridge.” — Controversies with the Inhabitants of New Marblehead.

The mile square tract of land sold by Indian sagamores to George Munjoy, was, according to the late Mr. Willis, conveyed by Munjoy’s widow and son, George, to Thomas Cooper of Boston, on the fifth of April, 1692. Thereafter it was called the “Cooper claim,” and will be so designated in these chapters. By meane conveyances it passed into the hands of General Samuel Waldo, from whom and his heirs the present owners, for the most part, derive their titles. A survey of the tract was made by William Pote, an early land surveyor, and a plan made by him is recorded in the Falmouth Proprietors’ books of land grants. The original is so much defaced that only the month, April, is legible, the day and year being entirely wanting; but from the date of a record on the opposite side of the paper on which the plan is given, we are warranted in assuming that the survey was made in the year 1743; for General Waldo, who was then in the zenith of his prosperity, having recently accomplished the ruin of his former partner, Colonel Westbrook, upon whose Falmouth estates, that year, he levied an execution of £10,500. The easterly boundary, on the river, is “by Mr. Phippeny’s land.” The latter was probably the largest purchase ever made from the Indians in this vicinity. In 1672, August fourteenth, Jenkins Williams, George Felt and Francis Neale purchased of *Nanaadouit* and *Wavaad Button*, a tract of land on the northeast side of the Presumpscot river, beginning at the easterly end of the mile square above named and extending down the river “to within 4 score poles of John Wakely’s now dwelling house,” and six miles back from the river. Wakely’s house was about three quarter of a mile below the lower falls. Felts’ son and

Neale and Williams conveyed this land to David Phippen before 1700. The Indian grantors probably claimed in place of Squitterygusset who had already departed for “the happy hunting grounds,” but it would seem from an old deposition preserved in the Willis collections that the other Indians disputed their right to convey.

These two tracts known since, as the “Cooper” and “Phippen claims” embrace nearly all our original territory on the northerly side of the river; for New Marblehead, now Windham, was laid out on the 15th day of May 1735 as follows:

“We began at a place called Saccarappa Falls, on Presumpscot river, and so as the river runs to a great pond called great Sebago Pond; thence north 45 degrees, east 4 miles and 120 rods; thence south 45 degrees, east to North Yarmouth back line; thence 45 degrees, east to North Yarmouth back line; thence 3 miles south 45 degrees west to the corner of North Yarmouth and Falmouth bounds; thence south 24 degrees 20 minutes 8 miles and 60 rods to Saccarappa Falls.”

The boundary line between Windham and that part of Falmouth which is now Westbrook remained in controversy until the 27th of November 1761, when it was established as at present existing, by an act of the General Court. The last settlement in Windham is said to have been made on the 30th of July 1737, by Captain Thomas Chute, who carried his family and effects up the river by the present route of the Sokokis and made a clearing and erected his log cabin where he afterwards kept an ordinary on land by the river side lately owned by the father of ex-Mayor Mahlon H. Webb. But previous to this time, from July 4, 1735, to June 9, 1737, the grantees had expended considerable sums of money by building bridges over Presumpscot river immediately above Saccarappa Falls and over Inkhorn and Colley Wrights; (now Dole’s) brooks and clearing a highway for the ingress of settlers. It will be seen that a large tract of land was long to dispute between the proprietaries of the two towns; but none of the first division or home lots in Windham were laid out upon the

same. It would seem, however, that some encroachments were made thereon by the Windham grantees, for it appears by the recitals in an old deed that the farm now owned by Mr. Abraham A. Cloudman was laid out to Richard Dana of Boston to compensate him for a former grant which he had been obliged to give up after the adjustment of the division line between Windham and Falmouth, it being found to be in the last named town.

The bridge for which the Windham grantees made appropriation at Saccarappa, if ever actually built, probably did not long continue to be used; for at the town meeting held in Falmouth on the 19th day of March 1754, it was "Voted that the selectmen be directed to lay out the money assessed on the mills at Saccarappy and Ammoncongan this year to repair the Great Bridge at Saccarappy."

The same year a return was made of a road. "Beginning at Saccarappy road at a pine tree marked, near the south corner of David Small's land at Deer Hill; thence "by south easterly courses which are given "till it intersects with the road that is laid to Presumpscot river by Joseph Conant's land."

Small is said to have lived on the same spot where the fine residence of Clement P. Maxwell now stands; and Conant's land was probably the tract of sixty acres last laid out to him by the Falmouth Proprietors.

Whatever was done about the application of the money assessed on the mills that year to the repairing of the "Great Bridge" at Saccarappy, does not seem to have been satisfactory to the good people then residing in Windham; at least not for any great length of time; for, at a town meeting held in Falmouth on the 9th February 1756, the selectmen were made a committee without pay to confer with "the Inhabitants of New Marblehead and others to see how much they will advance towards building a bridge over Presumpscot river and fix the most proper place therefore" and make report to the town at the ensuing annual meeting.

When the annual meeting came, in the month of March immediately following, it would seem that the matter of the bridge had already got into the courts, for Colonel Ezekiel Cushing was chosen "to make answer at the April term to the complaint exhibited by the inhabitants of New Marblehead, and to petition the sessions to

establish a ferry over said river for their accommodation."

The proposal for a ferry over a comparatively narrow stream seems to have met with little favor; in fact the only reply to it was doubtless embodied in an order to build a suitable bridge forthwith. Still, as the principle business of the town centered and town meetings were held upon the "Neck," while Saccarappa was only a small village in an outlying district the disposition to temporize and evade seems to have continued for a twelvemonth or more before the matter was finally disposed of. On the 30th of September 1757, a town meeting was held for the sole purpose, it would appear, of hearing "the report of the committee chosen in May to view the bridge lately built at Saccarappa."

The bridge evidently was not more acceptable than the report, for we have no recorded data respecting either, except what may be inferred from the fact that at the same meeting it was "vote to give Soloman Haskell Fifty Pounds Lawfull money for the bridge he has lately build at Saccarappy, provided the Court of Sessions will accept the same as a good and sufficient bridge, otherwise he is to make it sufficient to the Court's acceptance."

R.

TO BE CONTINUED.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 1895

CHAPTER IV. - CONTINUED.

Thomas Haskell, the Patriarch, and some of His Descendants,-- John Tyng's "Hundred Acres."

To the foregoing vote Solomon Haskell returned the following answer, which, if tradition is to be credited, was characteristic of the man:

"I consent to sell the Bridge to the town, as it now stands, for the above fifty pounds, but in case the court should not accept it as a sufficient Bridge, I refuse making any repairs or additions, but relinquish my right to the above sum and reserve the Bridge to myself.

SOLOMON HASKELL."

After two or three adjournments for brief intervals, evidently for the purpose of consulting the court as to the sufficiency of the bridge, the meeting was suffered to die a natural death. It is probable, therefore, that Haskell's terms were accepted, and his bridge, which was in the same place where the iron bridge stands to-day, became the property of the town.

Solomon Haskell appears in his day and generation to have been an active and enterprising man of affairs in this part of the ancient town. In a deposition given in 1805, and recorded in the Cumberland Registry of Deeds, he stated that he was seventy-nine years old and came to live in Saccarappa in February, 1740, and had resided here ever since, with the exception of about two and one-half years, that he lived at Ammoncongan. According to the inscription on the headstone in Saccarappa cemetery, his death occurred the twenty-second of May, 1816, when he was ninety-two years of age, thus making a difference of some two years between the age given on the gravestone and that given by himself in the deposition. But in either event he had passed the limit of four score years and ten, and had witnessed many things and events of startling interest, both local and national, as they occurred. Like most of the early settlers, he was actively engaged in the operation of mills and the tillage of the ground, both of which were made to yield handsome returns. He was one of the sons of Thomas Haskell, already mentioned, who purchased Joseph Conant's dwelling house in 1740, coming, as would appear, from his son's deposition, to reside at Saccarappa in February of that year. Thomas Haskell was born in Gloucester in 1689, and came to Falmouth Neck in 1726. His coming is thus alluded to in connection with the advent of other settlers, by Parson Smith: "Also one Haskell, a sober sort of man, with his family." From Babson's History of Gloucester, we learn that he was of the same family with Roger Haskell, an early settler of Salem, and was the son of Benjamin and Mary (Riggs) Haskell, and thus related to Jeremiah Riggs, the first of the name in this vicinity, and an early settler at Capisic. On coming to Saccarappa, Thomas Haskell not only acquired the house of Conant by purchase, but he had a grant of one hundred and three acres of land near by, the title of which,

or a portion thereof, involved him in litigation with the heirs of Thomas Cloice, an old settler, whose entire claim in the township he finally bought of the heirs. He also had an interest in a gristmill on the northerly side of the river, probably on the lower falls, which was in existence as late as May, 1813.

On the thirty-first of March, 1732, a grant of land, containing one hundred acres, on the southerly side of the river, was laid out to John Tyng, as follows: "Beginning at Saccarappa Falls and running down the river 126 1-2 rods to a stake, and back from the river 126 1-2 rods." The authorities are not agreed as to the connection of John Tyng with the celebrated family of that name, but from a careful examination of the subject I do not hesitate to assert that he was the brother of Sarah Tyng, the first wife of Rev. Thomas Smith, and son of William Tyng of Woburn. He remained in Falmouth but a few years, subsequently settling in Tyngsboro, where descendents bearing the name of Brinley were living a few years since. He long served as a judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Middlesex county, and was widely known as the "eccentric Judge Tyng of Tyngsboro." His grant of one hundred acres he disposed of, a few years after it was acquired, to General Samuel Waldo, who seems to have made this land an exception to his usual custom, selling it some time before 1750 to Benjamin and Solomon Haskell, brothers and sons of Thomas Haskell. Thus having large landed estates on opposite sides of the river, together with mills, so much frequented as gristmills were till a much later day, the Haskells wisely connected their possessions by a bridge of their own; and so were independent of the caprice of town meetings that were held seven miles away and were obviously controlled by voters who would not willingly tax themselves for needed improvements in a remote country village.

Benjamin Haskell, after a few years of joint ownership, conveyed his share of the Tyng tract to his brother, Solomon, but continued to hold his interest in the gristmill, and to reside on the northerly side of the river until his death on the fourteenth of October, 1785, at the age sixty. His grave and that of his second wife, Lydia, are marked by a double headstone in the sadly neglected burial ground on Scotch Hill. The inscription is to "Doct^r Benjamin Haskell," but in all conveyances that I have met with, where his

name occurs, he is mentioned as "yeoman." In the ledger of William Lunt, who, in the last century, resided at Pride's Corner, on the farm now owned and occupied by Henry B. Walker, occurs an account of mutual dealings between himself and Benjamin Haskell, the credit column of which I transcribe as showing the nature of the latter's medical practice, as well as the prices received in English money, viz.:

1775		£	s	d
May 11	By bleeding me	0	0	8
Aug 5	By haling 1 tooth	0	0	8
1777				
June 7	By 1 visit & bleeding my wife % Som Roots	0		
July 1	By 1 visit & Som Roots & Arbs	0		
3	By 1 visit & Som flsike	0		
10	By 1 snuf Bottel of Sorrop	0		
11	By 1 visit & bleeding my Wife	0		
1785				
June 15	By bleeding me	0	1	

William Lunt was a shoemaker as well as farmer, and in the debtor column of the ledger, after sundry charges for mowing and for repairing footwear for members of Haskell's family, is the following entry :

"this 31 day of May 1786

I settled all accounts with Mrs haskel as the Receipt will apear."

The "Receipt," which was doubled together and stitched to the leaf with shoethread, where it had, no doubt, remained for more than one hundred years, I have just detached and now transcribe for the benefit of the reader:

" FALMOUTH May 31 1786

Received of "M^r William Lunt Five Shillings in full of All accounts from the Beginning to this Day

LYDIA HASKELL } ADMINISTRX."

R.

TO BE CONTINUED.