

# The Narragansett Sun.

## HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1895

### CHAPTER VII.

The Conants again. — Samuel Conant and His Descendants.—Timothy Worcester.

A younger brother of the Joseph Conant, who is supposed to have made the first permanent settlement in Saccarappa, bore the Christian name of Samuel and was also an early settler in what is now Westbrook. He was born in Beverly, Mass., the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, 1717, and was therefore sixteen years the junior of his brother Joseph. It is probable, therefore, that he first came hither as a member of his brother's household. One of the early grantees of land in the vicinity of Pride's Bridge, within our present corporate limits, was Timothy Worcester, whose daughter Hannah became the wife of Samuel Conant in 1741. She must have died within the next three years, for on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, 1744, Conant was married to his second wife Mary, daughter of Francis Peabody of Middleton, Massachusetts.

The old two storied house on "Pork Hill" is said to have been owned and occupied by some of the Conant family. I have supposed that it might have been built by Joseph Conant and his brother Samuel, yet, although much out of repair it seems too modern for that, for Joseph Conant is known to have died near the end of the year 1764.

In a deed dated the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 1756, Samuel Conant describes himself as a millman, and conveys to Joseph Noyes of Falmouth, gentleman, one-half of a grist mill "at a place called Saccarappa on the western side of Presumpscot river, the other half belonging to my brother Joseph Conant." Joseph Noyes will be remembered as the same who sold an acre of land on the northerly side of the river to Samuel Pike who married Sarah, a daughter of Dr. Benjamin Haskell; and the grist mill which is the subject of this conveyance is not to be confused with the Haskell mill which was on the opposite

side of the river. Long after the first settlement of Gorham, which is said to have been made in 1736, the only grist mill available to the inhabitants of that town was at Presumpscot lower falls, to and from which they were accustomed to transport their "griste" by boat, carrying both boat and cargo around the falls at Saccarappa and Ammoncongan. The inconvenience to which their neighboring townsmen were thus subjected could not fail to be noticed by the Conant brothers, who were already domiciled at Saccarappa and they no doubt had the wisdom and foresight to discover in this the opportunity for the beginning of a profitable industry. The cultivation of Indian corn which the white man had learned from the savage, whose rude methods he had improved upon, soon became of inestimable value to the former and has so remained till the present time. The "acreage" of corn planted in all the clearings soon became something immense, affording subsistence for both man and animal in the infant settlements. Therefore, the grist mill followed close upon the saw mill, which it had always followed in the march of empire through the new world. The mill of the Conants at Saccarappa probably ante-dated that of the Haskells, for on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 1748, Parson Smith makes the following entry in the Journal: "Went to Saccaribig. Mr. Conant tells me he has ground some one thousand bushels of corn this winter, there being no other mill than his between North Yarmouth and Saco."

In 1760 Samuel Conant received one of the licenses from the municipal officers of Falmouth to keep a public house and sell spirituous liquors. It would be interesting at this day to know just where he lived at the time of keeping a public house. The 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 1782, in a deed in which he is described as a miller, he conveys to his son Daniel Conant, one half the house in which he lives, together with the right he has to the mill privileges adjoining said house. This is the last time his name appears in the county records, and it is probable that his death occurred soon afterward. He left three children, who lived to marry and have families,

viz.: Elizabeth, William and Daniel. The order in which the names are given is assumed on the strength of certain dates, which would make them all the children of the second wife. But in this I may be in error regarding William, since I find nothing from which to judge of the date of his birth except that of his marriage, which occurred nine years at least, after his sister Elizabeth had married and become the mother of a family. Elizabeth, daughter of Samuel and Mary (Peabody) Conant was born in 1755 and was married previous to 1770, to William Babb. This latter was a son of James Babb, the ancestor of our present honored townsman of the same name, and was born "within a mile of a place called Saccarappa." The place of his birth was doubtless the farm now occupied by Mr. James Babb and his son Isaac G. Babb at the junction of Spring street and the Buxton road. Of the family of William and Elizabeth Babb fuller details will be given in a future chapter.

William, son of Samuel and Mary Conant, was married to Ruth Chapman on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1779, by Rev. Thomas Browne, first minister of the church of Capisic. He lived and died on a lot of land on the spot where L. W. Edwards' store now stands, at the corner of Main and Bridge streets in Saccarappa. This land, a comparatively small tract for the time, was purchased in 1780 from Daniel and Sarah Dole by Archelaus Lewis, afterward the well-known "Squire" Lewis, who built the present farm house at Cumberland Mills. Mr. Lewis in early life was a tailor, and had his shop on the land which he purchased of the Doles. I am not informed of the exact date when these premises came into the possession of William Conant, but it must have been during the latter part of the last century, for it is known that his death occurred after 1803 and previous to 1808. Peter Thatcher, who for a short time was a practicing lawyer in Saccarappa, administered his estate. He left a widow, Ruth, and three children, Samuel, Lydia and Edward. Of Lydia and Edward nothing further is known. Samuel lived for many years in the family of his uncle Daniel and that of his sons, on the present Conant place in this city, and died there previous to 1870, unmarried.

Mrs. Mary (Peabody) Conant, widow of Samuel Conant, died in 1800.

Daniel, son of Samuel and Mary Conant was married the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 1780, to Anna, daughter of Solomon Haskell, Sr., by Rev.

Thomas Browne. In a deposition given 1840, he states that he is 80 years of age, that he was born and had always resided in Saccarappa, and had been, for many years, engaged in lumbering and driving the river. He died the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 1853, at the age of 93 years. His wife, Anna Haskell Conant, died in 1844, aged 79 years. Both are buried in the Saccarappa Cemetery.

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TO BE CONTINUED.

## HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, AUG 1, 1895

Timothy Pike and his Forge, Saw Mills and other industries in the last century.—The Quinby family.

Besides the mills at Saccarappa and old Ammoncongan, there were saw mills erected in the last century, at Stroudwater Falls, so called, on the present Spring street, and at the outlet of the Duck Pond and upon Mill Brook, a little north of the residence of the late Nathan W. Boody. The Haskell family, and the brothers Conant, as we have already stated, had grist mills at Saccarappa, which did a large and no doubt, profitable business, and with nineteen saw mills all in operation at one time, at night as well as during the day, Saccarappa must have presented the appearance of a busy and prosperous village.

In 1785, Benjamin Quinby from Somersworth, N.H., purchased water power on the island, near where the electric power house now stands, of John Bailey and others, and erected a fulling mill, but he and his family did not confine their attention to the dressing of cloth only, for a saw mill standing near the fulling mill was known as the "Quinby mill." Benjamin Quinby had a numerous family, and all the persons of the name now residing in Westbrook are supposed to be his descendants. But there were Quinbys here before his coming, who were owners or part owners of mills and water power, undoubtedly the descendants of Joseph Quinby who married Mary, daughter of Thomas Haskell, whose descendants reside at Stroudwater. The late Isaac Cobb gives inscriptions from the old cemetery at Stroudwater to Joseph Quinby who died the 14<sup>th</sup>

of April 1776 aged 61 years, and to his widow, Mary, who died the 12th of April 1815, aged 93. Mr. Cobb thought Joseph Quinby was buried at Saccarappa but did not state his reasons for thinking so. The late Wm. Willis was informed by an old Mrs. Day, who formerly lived on Elm street, Portland, and was a grand-daughter of Joseph Quinby, that her grandfather and his brother Benjamin (the last named being a weaver who settled at Saccarappa,) came from Wales. But this family tradition was sadly misleading, for according to other and more careful investigations, the progenitor of the family in this country was Robert Quinby who settled in Salisbury, Mass., in 1658. Two of his sons are said to have removed to New Hampshire where their posterities are numerous; and it was most likely one of these sons who was the ancestor of Joseph and Benjamin who came to old Falmouth.

One of the results of the contest with the mother country which made the united colonies a independent nation, was the establishment in many of the New England towns of what were then called forges, for the production of iron that could be used for the various purposes for which it was then required from "bog ore." That the production of iron from one found in the vicinity, was once a leading industry in Saccarappa is not even remembered at the present time by the oldest inhabitant, and yet such is the fact. The forge stood on the northerly side of the river near the upper dam, on a part of the site not covered by the gingham mill, otherwise No. 3, of the Westbrook Manufacturing Company. The following document copied from the county records, will be of interest as showing the names of the persons engaged in this industry and the proportions in which they owned.

"FALMOUTH, 17 April, 1790.

"An agreement mutually ententered into by the "subscribers witnesseth that they are owner of the "Forge at Saccarappa just completed and owned as follows:

|                   |           |      |        |
|-------------------|-----------|------|--------|
| "Aaron Burnham,   | 1-6, £65  | 8s   | 7 1-2d |
| "Dennis Marr,     | 1-6, £65  | 8s   | 7 1-2d |
| "Timothy Pike,    | 1-3, £180 | 17s  | 3d     |
| "Peleg Wadsworth, | 1-3       | £180 | 17s 3d |

PELEG WADSWORTH,  
TIMOTHY PIKE,  
DENNIS MARR,  
AARON BURNHAM.

An account of the life and public services of General Peleg Wadsworth belongs to the history of the State and has been often written. He was the maternal grandfather of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the immortal poet, and his former residence in the city of Portland, now occupied by his grand-daughter, a sister of the poet, is one of the first objects pointed out to the stranger. Marr and Burnham were of Scarborough, and men of energy and enterprise in their day and generation. The name of the other owner too, is one that should not be forgotten, at least in Saccarappa, where during the closing part of the last century and early part of the present, he was one of the foremost citizens.

Mr. Pike was the only son of Timothy Pike of Newbury. The elder Timothy, by his will dated in 1767, gave to his son Timothy his "negro man Harry," his blacksmith tools, various household goods, his gun and sword, the family clock, forty pounds in money, the whole of the land down in Windham, and a third of the home and land in Newbury, after his wife's decease.

Timothy Pike, the younger, resided for awhile in Newbury, where he married and had several children. His wife dying, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Ephraim Jones, and granddaughter of the Hon. Moses Pearson of Falmouth, of whom a more extended account is reserved for a future chapter. Previous to his second marriage Mr. Pike seems to have removed to Falmouth Neck, in fact he came to what is now Portland in 1774. By the burning of the town by Mowatt in 1775, Mr. Pike was a heavy loser, and soon after removed to Saccarappa where he died in 1818.

Whether his iron industry was successful we have no means of knowing. He was by trade a blacksmith, probably having learned the business from his father, and at Saccarappa he manufactured axes, sythes, shovels and other implements useful to husbandry and about the mills for which he could not have failed to find a ready sale.

For a year or two Mr. Pike resided in Windham where he served in the board of selectmen. The farm where he lived was near the Falmouth (now Westbrook) line, and is at present owned and occupied by Cornelius Small. Mr. Pike acted for many years as justice of the peace, in which capacity his name frequently appears in connection with real estate conveyances made during the first years of this century. He was also the first subscriber to the old Falmouth (afterward Westbrook) Social

Library, lately merged in the Walker Library, taking two shares.

One of his sons, Samuel Deane Pike, married Mary, a daughter of Jonathan and Mary (Crowley) Webb. They were the parents of the late Samuel G. Pike of Calais, who formerly owned the tract of land now the property of the Westbrook Manufacturing Company, and known during later years as "Scotch hill". William, another son of Timothy Pike, was the father of the late Frederick A. Pike of Calais, and James S. Pike, formerly the well known correspondent of the New York Tribune. The wife of Frederick A. Pike, who is still living in Calais, will be remembered as the author of the charming romance entitled "Ida May" which was quite popular in the days of the anti-slavery agitation.

I suspect that the building in which the iron industry had been carried on by Mr. Pike and his associates was suffered to stand for a long time after the business had ceased to be profitable, in a dismantled condition, for to the present day, the term "old iron works" is applied to old buildings in Saccarappa, and for many years was the popular designation of the old meeting house which stood on Saco street.

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