

The Narragansett Sun.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 1895

CHAPTER VIII.

The Proctors of Westbrook.—Early Settlers, and Plan of Lots, near Prides Bridge.—John Snow and Capt. John Waite.—John Cox the Tory, and his numerous family.

All persons in Westbrook bearing the name of Proctor,—and at present they are not numerous,—are descended from the John Proctor who lost his life in the heroic endeavor to stem the tide of fanaticism which swept over old Salem Village, now Danvers, Mass., in 1692, known in history as the “Salem Witchcraft Delusion.” John Proctor was the son of the immigrant of the same name, who came to Ipswich, Mass., from London, in 1635, and subsequently settled in Salem. There is a tradition in the village where he lived, that John Proctor, Jr., was a man of Herculean mould, as well as great force of character; traits which were inherited both here and in the mother state by many succeeding generations of his descendants.

Samuel Proctor, a son of the martyr, came to Falmouth Neck between September, 1717, and November, 1719, and built his house on Fore street, between Market (formerly Lime) and Silver Sts. He was born, no doubt, in Salem Village, in 1680, and came hither from Lynn, where he probably found his wife, Sarah, daughter of Anthony Brackett. Whether this was the same Anthony Brackett who was killed by the Indians in 1689, I am unable to state. It was the union, however, of two hardy races, and the offspring were well fitted by inheritance to cope with the hardships of pioneer life which awaited them from the cradle, and attended them to the end of what were, for the most part, long and eventful lives.

In the ledger of William Lunt, of which frequent use has been made in previous chapters, several persons by the name of Proctor are mentioned, this showing that in the second half of the last century the name was quite common in the vicinity of the present Pride’s Corner.

William, the fifth child of Samuel and Mary (Brackett) Proctor, born the 31st of August 1724, married Charity Lunt in 1750, and Susannah Hall in 1760. There is a tradition among her descendants, that the second wife had been left an orphan at a tender age by the killing of her parents by the Indians. In 1778 William Proctor is described as then of Windham, but formerly of Falmouth, housewright. Prior to that date he had sold to Joseph Winslow one eighth of a mill privilege on the Duck Pond stream. Mill Brook—about a half a mile from the Presumpscot river, together with one eighth of three acres of land where the same would best “commode” said mill privilege. The privilege is further described in the deed, as the same where the “Proctor mill,” had formerly stood. The site of this mill was the same mentioned in the last chapter as a little to the northward of the resident of the late Nathan W. Boody. A bridge once crossed the Presumpscot river in this vicinity, about an eighth of a mile above Pride’s Bridge, and was called Proctor’s Bridge. William Proctor died in Windham 1806. He had a son William Jr., who was a member of the New Gloucester society of Shakers; and a son Anthony who removed from Windham to Raymond, and was probably the ancestor of the Proctors in that town and Naples. An Anthony Proctor was among the original grantees of the township of New Marblehead, (Windham) who may have been a son of Samuel of Portland. From William Proctor, who joined the Shakers, was descended the late John C. Proctor of Portland, the well known real estate agent.

Samuel Proctor received from the Falmouth Proprietors several grants of land within the present limits of Westbrook, on which his eldest son, John, who was born in Lynn, the 24th of June 1715, seems to have established his residence prior to 1778; for in that year he conveyed thirty five acres from his homestead, on the northerly side of the Presumpscot river, in Falmouth, to his son John Proctor, Jr. The last named was the father of the late Frederick Proctor, who resided for some time in Gray, and the late James Proctor, who resided on Spring

street, Saccarappa. The wives of Frederick and James Proctor were daughters of Moses and Abigail (March) Quinby, and sisters of the late Hon. Aaron Quinby of Westbrook.

Nathaniel Proctor, a son of John, and grandson of Samuel, owned and occupied a large farm on both sides of the road now called East Bridge street, a portion of which is now owned by Mr. Charles E. Cobb. He left sons Samuel A., Richard, Charles, Henry and John, and several daughters, one of the latter being the wife of Charles Babb.

I have before me, as I write, a plan of lots in the vicinity of Pride's Bridge, which accounts for its own origin and existence as follows:

"This is a Plan or Description of Sundry Lots of Land in the Township of Falmouth lying on the North Easterly side of Presumpscot River, which I the subscriber with the assistance of Capt. George Berry and Thos. Bracket, Chairman, and by desier of Capt. John Waite and Mr. John Snow have faithfully and impartially surveyed, December 25, 1753.

Attest: JOHN SMALL, Sur.

On this plan a small tributary of the Presumpscot, presumably the present Mill Brook, designated as "Proctor's Mill Stream" showing that the Proctors had already (1753) made a beginning of milling operations within our present limits. So much of the steam as is shown upon the plan is included in a tract of "Forty three acres laid out to John Cox, deceased." Cox was no doubt the same who married Sarah, a daughter of Samuel Proctor in 1730. According to the late Mr. Willis, he had by her, and two other wives, a family of twenty children. In the Revolution he left this country for Nova Scotia, where some of his descendants still reside. East of Cox's land, and adjacent there to, is a tract of forty-three acres which was laid out to Joseph Conant. This I take to be the same land which Conant subsequently sold to John Webb "Taylor," and now known as the Wm. Walker farm. Adjacent to Cox's land, on the easterly side, is a tunnel-shaped tract of forty-seven acres, also laid to Joseph Conant; and immediately to the westward of this is a tract of sixty acres laid out to Ebenezer Cobb; while below Conant's tract of forty-three acres is a lot of thirteen acres laid out to Capt. Waite on the right of Isaac Sawyer. Below the last named is a tract of sixty acres which belongs to Mr. John Snow, he being the "assign" of Timothy Worster, deceased.

The lots above named all make their southerly boundary on the Presumpscot river. Northerly of these is another range of lots, beginning on the westerly side, with one hundred acres laid out to Joseph Pride. The next easterly is a tract of thirty-three acres laid out to (Thomas?) Haskell. The remaining four lots purport to have been laid out to Mr. Snow and Captain Waite, and it is evident from the ruthless cutting of corners that the original grants and surveys were made with a good deal of looseness.

Mr. John Snow appears to have been an early settler in the vicinity of Pride's Bridge, and an enterprising and active man of business in his time. It was probably his daughter, Mary, who married Thomas Brackett in 1743; and it is equally probable that Brackett was the same who served at the survey as one of the chairmen.

R.

TO BE CONTINUED.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1895

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

The Proctors again.—Something about the Bracketts.—Peletiah March and Family.—"Joe Wyer," the Indian Scout.—The Frye family of Westbrook and Lewiston.—John Cox who was killed at Pemaquid.

"To ye Selectmen of ye town of Falmouth:

According to ye vote of ye Town wee the subscribers do Choose ye stream lying Between perscatquies and Amoncongong upon the N. E. sid of presumscot River as witness our hands. This our Report to the Selectmen of Falmouth.

Dated at Falmouth July ye 12 1728

SAMUEL PROCTOR,
JOHN PEREY,
EDWARD ARMSTRONG,
SAML MCCAUSLANDS.

This "report" was made to the selectmen the same day with that of Benjamin Ingersoll and others stating that they had chosen the falls at Saccarappa as a site for lumber mills. The stream selected by Proctor and his associates probably carried a much larger volume of water then than at the present time, for then all the back country was heavily wooded. Samuel

Proctor who heads the list, will be recognized as the first of the name in this vicinity. The steam which was subsequently known as "Proctor's mill steam," it will be remembered had its outlet into the Presumpscot river upon land which is stated upon the plan, which we have mentioned at such length, above, as having been laid out to John Cox, deceased. I am now convinced that I was in error in supposing that this grantee was the John Cox who married the daughter of Proctor as his first wife, and subsequently became a tory. It was most likely his father who bore the same name and was admitted an inhabitant of Falmouth in 1729 and lost his life in 1747 in an encounter with the Indians at Pemaquid. He and his son John were both sea captains.

I have learned since the first part of this chapter was printed that John Snow was by trade a ship carpenter, and had his residence near Back Cove in the present city of Deering. Capt. George Berry, one of the chairmen at the survey of the lands near Pride's Bridge, was a brother of John Snow's wife, while the other chairman, Thomas Brackett, was his son-in-law. Brackett's home was in Deering near Morrill's Corner; and the farm of Snow embraced the land formerly owned and occupied by the late John Read, Esq., as his homestead on Ocean street. I own this bit of information to one of the most reliable and industrious of our local historians. As one good turn always deserves another, I would be obliged to him if he would give me some information concerning John Small who made the survey in questions.

The 23rd of May 1732, the Falmouth Proprietors granted to Samuel Proctor 154 acres of land at a place called "Deering Hill" in Falmouth. This grant I take to have been in the rear of the present homestead of Marrett Lamb, Esq. At any rate it ran down to the Presumpscot river.

The 17th of October 1734, the same parties lay out to Proctor forty-three acres on the northerly side of Presumpscot river "beginning at a stake standing fourteen rods north of the side of the small brook that empties itself into the Presumpscot river near John Cox's land." If the "small brook" mentioned here is identical with "Proctor's Mill Stream," this grant ought to be shown upon the plan already mentioned, but in fact it is not there.

The 12th of January 1736—7 o.s., another tract of thirty acres is laid out to Proctor, on the

northerly side of the Presumpscot which, also, does not appear upon the place. These omissions I do not undertake to account for; but certain it is that Proctor had grants of land in the present city of Westbrook, or purchased lands from others, on which John, one of his sons, had his home.

The mill stream was selected by Proctor and his associates in pursuance, as the "report" states, of a vote of the town; but he and his partners were less fortunate in their selection than their contemporaries Ingersoll and others for the mill and dam erected on the Proctor stream, have long since disappeared: and the land in the vicinity has little value except for agricultural purposes. In fact the volume of water that now runs in the stream is so small, that it has no permanent value for manufacturing purposes.

Among the names in the Lunt Ledger is that of Peletiah March, to whom two pages are accorded. I do not know the place of March's residence, but I presume it was somewhere within our present city limits. The fact that he was one of Lunt's principal patrons does not prove that he lived in the vicinity of Pride's Corner; for it is evident from the entries in his book that Lunt often went, after the fashion of the time in which he lived, from house to house making or repairing the boots and shoes of his customers and their families.

Peletiah March was born the seventh of April, 1741, in Amesbury, Mass. In December 1772, he purchased a house lot in Portland of John Proctor. His transactions with Lunt begin in October, 1772, and continue until 1790. The last on the credit side throws light upon the business in which he was engaged, to wit: "By tanning one calf skin." It would seem therefore, that he was a tanner. His first wife died in October, 1775, and he married, second, fifteenth September, 1776, Mary, widow of John Brackett, of Saccarappa. His children, eleven in all, were as follows:

By first wife,

1. Edmund, married _____ Woodbury. In October, 1802, he was a hotel keeper in Saccarappa. Of his subsequent career I am not informed.
2. John, married Mary Weare. She was the daughter of Joseph Weare, the famous Indian scout, traditionally known as 'old Joe Wyer.'

3. Sally, married Solomon Haskell, Jr., of Saccarappa. Her descendants in this city and vicinity are numerous.
4. Polly, never married.
5. Abigail, married Moses Quinby, son of Benjamin Quinby, who came from Somersworth, N.H., and was by occupation a clothier. They were the parents of the late Hon. Aaron Quinby, and of Harriet and Elizabeth, who married respectively, Frederick and James Proctor, sons of John Proctor, Jr.
6. Anna, married Dean Frye, who came to Saccarappa from Fryeburg. They were the parents of the late Col. John M. Frye, of Lewiston, and grandparents of the U.S. Senator, William P. Frye. Mrs. Anna (March) Frye is said to have been one week old at the burning of Portland by Mowatt.

By second wife.

7. Joseph. I have no further account of him.
8. Betsey, married Johnson Knight of Otisfield.
9. Peletiah. Descendants of his are living in Hillsdale, Mich., among them being Col. Edwin J. March of that place.
10. Jane, married Stephen Swett (of Portland?).
11. Dorothy (called Dolly), married Jacob Gerry of Falmouth. Their son, Peletiah Gerry, was formerly a leading merchant in Bath.

John March, son of Peletiah, and his wife Mary Weare were the ancestors of the late William M. Sargent of Portland, from whom I received most of the data concerning the families of Weare and March given above.

Peletiah March, the elder, died in Falmouth in 1813. Sargent thought his first wife might have been Mary Gooding or Goodwin.

John Brackett, whose widow became March's second wife lived for some time and probably died in Saccarappa, on the old road to Gorham, on the place now owned and occupied by Mrs. Conant.

Several persons by the name of Brackett figured in the pages of Lunt's Ledger some of whom were his neighbors living within our present town limits, while other, no doubt lived in what is now Deering, and others still perhaps on the Neck, now Portland.

The task of tracing the several families of Bracketts who have resided or still reside in our

city to Anthony and Thomas of Falmouth Neck, ancestors of all of the name in this vicinity and both killed by the Indians is still before me. I should despair of accomplishing it, however, were it not for the fact that I rely upon the generous assistance of the gentleman who has already set me right upon the location of the homestead of John Snow and Thomas Brackett; who in fact, has found out more of those matters by patient and careful delving of the records than any one else in this vicinity.

R.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)