

The Narragansett Sun.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1895

CHAPTER XII.

Some old Deeds.—The other Jonathan Webb, and how he came to be called “pithy” Webb by his pupils.—Joseph Pride and Ebenezer Cobb, and their Descendants.—Moses Pearson, and land near the Duck Pond which he conveyed to the older Joseph Conant.

I have before me, as I write, an original deed given by the elder Joseph Conant, the alleged first settler in Saccarappa, to Benjamin Sweetser and John Marston, both of Falmouth “gentlemen” bearing date the 17th of March, 1756, and conveying “a certain Tract or Parcell of Land, laying and being in the Township of Falmouth, and on the northerly side of Presumpscot River, containing forty seven acres bounded as follows, beginning at the lower Bounds on said Presumpscot River of sixty acres of Land laid out to the heirs of Ebenezer Cobb late of said Falmouth deceased, thence running down said River East twenty three degrees North, nineteen rods, thence North and by West, one hundred and forty Rods and one half Rod to a stake, thence West twenty three degrees South, one hundred Rods and thence South east forty Rods and an half Rod to the Bounds first mentioned; being a lot of Land laid out to me by ye Proprietors of the said Town of Falmouth Feby. 1st, 1736-7 as by said Proprietors Records may more fully appear.” This deed is in the handwriting of Major Enoch Freeman the founder of the distinguished family of that name prominent for so many years in the affairs of the old town, and was acknowledged by the maker before him. Deeds at that time required two subscribing witnesses, and this one was signed in the presence of Mr. Freeman and Jonathan Webb. As the transaction took place in March 1756, when Jonathan Webb afterwards a leading business man and boniface in Saccarappa, was not yet six months old, it is evident that he could not have been a witness in this occasion. As I have been asked quite recently how I account for the fact that there were two Jonathan Webbs. In taking leave of the name, I will allow the late Mr.

Willis to answer the question, which he does in a marginal note to Parson Smith’s journal, as follows:

Jonathan Webb from Boston graduated at Harvard College in 1754, and came here, (to Falmouth Neck, now Portland,) to take charge of a school. He was not very popular. The boys called him pithy Webb, from his habit of putting the pith of the quill in his mouth when he made the pens. Edward Preble, afterwards the Commodore, who was always ready for a joke, once made the pith a little two unpalatable for the Domine, which brought down his vengeance on the offender’s head. Mr. Webb married Lucy, eldest daughter of Brigadier Preble in 1763, but had no issue by her. He lived in the house now the Casco House on Middle street (the same spot in the rear now occupied by the Casco Bank,) at the breaking out of the Revolution and kept boarders. President John Adams boarded with him when he attended court here, which he was in the habit of doing before the war. He died soon after the war commenced.

He is not known to have been connected with any other persons of the name in this vicinity.

The land described in the above mentioned conveyance was one of the grants laid down upon a plan which was noticed in Chapter VIII, of this History, and according to the scale given upon the same, the starting point was on the northerly bank of the Presumpscot river about seventy rods above the mouth of Mill Brook, or “Proctor’s Mill Stream,” as it was formerly called, near the residence of the late Nathan W. Boody. Beginning at the mouth of Mill Brook and extending about sixty rods down the northerly bank of the Presumpscot, was the grant of forty three acres which Joseph Conant conveyed in 1761 to John Webb, the tailor. No highways or townways are indicated upon the plan in question; and probably at the time when it was made—25th December 1753—none had been formally laid out in its vicinity. The last named grant is now, and has been for many years crossed diagonally by the County road from Portland to Bridgton; while the same and the grants above it bordering on the river are traversed by an old road, now called east Bridge street. The heirs of Ebenezer Cobb, to whom the sixty-acre grant was made, which formed the

westerly boundary of Conant's forty seven acres, I assume, for the want of better information, were the progenitors of a part, if not all, of the Cobbs now resident in Westbrook, Deering and Windham.

The westerly boundary of the Conant and Cobb grants, as was noticed in the chapter where the plan is first mentioned, is upon one hundred acres laid out to Joseph Pride and thirty acres laid out to Haskell. The Joseph Pride to whom this tract of one hundred acres was granted was most likely the first person of the name in the old town. He is noticed by Willis in the History of Portland as follows: "Isaac Savage and Joseph Pride, the first emigrants of the name, also came with their families." This was in 1726. Pride is said to have lived at Back Cove, on the 12th of April, 1728, Joseph and Sarah Pride had a son Joseph born in Falmouth; and it was probably their daughter Amy, born before they came here, who married Benjamin Larrabee, whose daughter Elizabeth, born in 1732, married John Webb. There is no evidence that the elder Joseph Pride ever occupied the grant of one hundred acres, but on or near it persons of the name still reside, having acquired their homes by inheritance from ancestors who have long been domiciled within our present town limits. The elder Joseph Pride was probably in middle life when he "emigrated" to this vicinity, and it was no doubt his death which was noticed in 1747, among those of the persons who had died that year, by Parson Smith, as that of "old Mr. Pride."

Another ancient document of interest, now in my possession bears the autograph of Moses Pearson, a man who held numerous high positions during a long and useful life, among which were those of first sheriff of the County of Cumberland and judge of the Court of Common Pleas. It is a deed from Pearson to Joseph Conant, Sr., under date of 5th March 1754, and conveys land near the Duck Pond, in Falmouth, probably the same premises which Conant conveyed shortly before his death in November 1764, to his sons, Joseph Jr., and Bartholomew. The deed is in the handwriting of the maker, except the certificate of acknowledgment which was written by the magistrate as appears from the then customary phraseology. "Coram Enoch Freeman, Jus. Pacis." The land which the deed conveys I am informed is now owned and occupied by Mr. James Gowen. The subscribing witnesses are Jesse Stephenson and Benjamin Titcomb.

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TO BE CONTINUED.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1895

CHAPTER XII. — CONTINUED.

Moses Pearson Again.—A Brief Outline of his Life and Public Services.—Benjamin Titcomb, the son-in-law of Pearson, and some of his Descendants.—Andrew Titcomb of Westbrook and his family.—Judge Luther Fitch and the Fitch Property.

Of the first named witness, Jesse Stephenson, nothing further is known, and I have failed to find his name in any other connection. Benjamin Titcomb was the ancestor of most of the persons of the name in this vicinity. He was doubly connected with Pearson, being at once his son-in-law and the nephew of his wife. Moses Pearson never lived in Westbrook, but many of his descendants have resided, and still reside here; and some of them have been among our most enterprising and useful citizens. No history of the town, therefore, can be complete that does not give a sketch of his long and eventful life, at least in an abbreviated form. He was born in Newbury in 1697, and emigrated to Falmouth Neck in 1728, which ever after remained his home. He was by trade a joiner; but being a man of intelligence and great capacity for business, he was soon elected to positions of responsibility and trust in the young town, serving as town clerk, selectman and treasurer in the first years after settling here. In 1737, '40 and '49 he was representative in the General Court. In 1745, having raised a company in this vicinity, he joined the army in the memorable and important expedition against Louisburg. After the capture of that stronghold of the French King, he was made treasurer of the regiments which had been engaged in the siege, and appointed to receive and distribute the spoil of victory. The principal part of what is now the town of Standish was granted to Pearson and others as a remuneration for their sufferings in the Louisburg expedition, and was called Pearsons town until its incorporation by its present name in 1785. In 1760, on the establishment of the county of Cumberland, Pearson was appointed the first Sheriff and served until 1768, when he was succeeded by Col. William Tyng. Although not a lawyer, nor even a man with liberal education, in

1770 he was made judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and continued in office till the war of Independence. He died on the fifth day of June 1878, aged 81 years. He married Sarah Titcomb, daughter of William Titcomb of Newbury, and sister of Col. Moses Titcomb who was killed at Ticonderoga, on the 8th of September 1755. She was born in 1693, and her death on the second of November 1766 is thus noticed by Rev. Dr. Deane who was her son-in-law. "Mrs. Pearson died about 9 o'clock in the morning." Moses and Sarah Pearson had six daughters and no son. The daughters, all of whom married were:

- 1.—Mary, born 4th December 1720, married Ephraim Jones in 1739, and died in 1775. Their daughter, Elizabeth married Timothy Pike, of Saccarappa, already noticed and was the mother of his children. The descendants are quite numerous.
- 2.—Elizabeth, born 20th February 1722; married 1st Joseph Birney 1745, and 2nd Joseph Wise in 1749. Her descendants by the second marriage are somewhat numerous in Westbrook.
- 3.—Sarah, born 28 November 1723, married Daniel Dole and died in 1785. Their descendants reside in Stroudwater.
- 4.—Eunice, born 25 January 1727, married Rev. Samuel Deane, D.D., second pastor of the First Parish Church of Falmouth (now Portland) 3 April 1766, and died in 1812. They had no children.
- 5.—Anne, born 19 of January, 1729, married 1753, her cousin Benjamin Titcomb, subscribing witness of the deed of Pearson to Conant as we have seen. She died in 1800.
- 6.—Lois born 11th of August 1733, married Joshua Freeman in 1750 and died the 21st of March 1813.

The father of Joshua Freeman bore the same name. He came from Barnstable, Cape Cod, to Portland previous to 1740, and kept a store and tavern in the same spot where the First National Bank now stands. He bought the land for £80 O.T., which was equal to about \$90, in silver. Mr. Willis says "It may show something of the style of an early day to describe the dress of Joshua Freeman when he went to court Lois Pearson in 1750, as given by himself to Mr. Isaac Ilsley. He said he wore a full bottomed wig and cocked hat, scarlet coat and small clothes, white vest and stockings, shoes and buckles, and two watches, one on each side. He was then twenty years old. Think of any man ----- and, young or old, of American birth, appearing in the streets of Portland at the present day in such attire!

Benjamin Titcomb, who married his cousin Anne Pearson, was long a prominent man in the affairs of the old town, and acquired a large estate for his time. He came to Falmouth in 1746, after the capture of Louisburg, having been persuaded to settle here by his kinsman Moses Pearson, whose daughter, as we have seen, he subsequently married. He was by trade a blacksmith and had a shop on the breast work, for which Central Wharf was extended before the filling of the flats and construction of the present Commercial street. He was long a deacon of the First Parish Church, served the old town on the board selectmen, and in 1784, was one of the representatives to the General Court. He died the 15th of October 1794 aged 72, and his widow died in 1800 at the same age.

The eldest son of Benjamin and Anne Titcomb, who is called by Willis Andrew Phillips, but who appears in recorded conveyances without the middle name, married his cousin Mary, daughter of Daniel and Sarah (Pearson) Dole and settled in that part of Falmouth, which is now Westbrook where he died in 1818. The following persons participated in the division of his real estate on the 23rd of July 1819, viz.: Sally Titcomb, Moses Quinby and Anne his wife, Levi Quinby and Mary his wife, Luther Fitch and Almira his wife.

Among his Saccarappa possessions mention is made of a sawmill, called the Titcomb mill, which was upon the Island now owned in part by W.K. Dana & Co. To Luther Fitch and Almira his wife, who was Andrew Titcomb's daughter, was assigned the water power and land between Main street and the river, now in possession of Samuel H. Lisk and others; and a large tract of land extending from Main street southerly to land of Jeremiah Johnson, the westerly boundary being the road to Scarborough, now called Saco street. This was the well known Fitch property now traversed by Mechanic and Central streets as laid out by Capt. Isaac F. Quinby who purchased it from the late Judge Fitch.

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