

The Narragansett Sun.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1895

CHAPTER XVI.

Gen. Samuel Waldo the great land owner.—Gen. Henry Knox, “the last of the Barons.”

Parson Smith, writing in the now famous journal, under date 4th May, 1759, makes the following entry:

“Gov. Pownal came in here in Capt. Saunders.” Again on the 8th of the same month he writes: “He sailed to-day with 400 men for Penobscot to build a fort there,” and on the 31st he continues, “We hear that Brigadier Waldo died suddenly at Penobscot on Wednesday last.”

In the marginal note to the journal, Mr. Willis tells us that “the Fort was built in Prospect, near Penobscot river, on Fort Point, and was called Fort Pownal. * * * * Gen. Waldo accompanied the Governor and took great interest in the erection of the fortification as promotive of the interest of the proprietors of the Waldo patent, whose boundary extended to this spot. While viewing the location with the Governor, May 23, he exclaimed in reference to his patent, “here is my bound,” and instantly fell in an apoplectic fit, and expired on the spot.”

The Governor to commemorate the melancholy event, caused a leaden plate, with an inscription upon it, to be buried in the place. Gen. Waldo was sixty-three years old, and left four children, viz: Samuel and Francis of Portland, Lucy married to Isaac Winslow of Roxbury, and Hannah who married Thomas Flucker of Boston, and was the mother of Gen. Knox’s wife.”

The elder Williamson in his “History of Maine,” published many years ago, says that Gen. Waldo was born in England and was “a man personable tall of stature, and of light complexion.” For aught that appears to the contrary, the personal description is correct, but the historian was in error respecting the place of Gen. Waldo’s birth, and the error is repeated by the younger Williamson. Instead of being of foreign birth Waldo was born on New England soil, probably in Boston, where his father Jonathan Waldo, was a distinguished merchant.

Gen. Samuel Waldo appears always to have had his principal residence in Boston, although the care of his large estates brought him frequently to the district of Maine. The high social standing of the family is shown by the position of the names of his sons in their respective classes at Harvard. In 1743 when the names of students were arranged according to the social rank of their parents, and not alphabetically as at the present day, Samuel Waldo’s was the fourteenth in a class of thirty, and in 1747, four years later, that of his brother Francis, was second in a class numbering twenty-eight, a fact which indicated the high and ever increasing importance of the family in the province. By this time, Gen. Waldo, who had been second command in the memorable expedition against Louisbourg, in 1745, had gained a foothold in almost every habitable part of Maine. In old Falmouth, prior to the Louisbourg expedition, after extending his possessions in connection with Col. Thomas Westbrook, everywhere that lands could be purchased he had swooped down upon the latter with an execution for a very large amount, seizing his possessions wherever they could be found and leaving him to die soon after, in disappointment and destitution at his home in Stroudwater.

In what is now the city of Westbrook, Waldo acquired title to the Simpson tract of ten acres through which the main street of Saccarappa is now located, the Tyng tract of one hundred acres, next below the Simpson tract, a tract of one hundred and sixty acres below the “hundred acres,” a tract of eight hundred acres extending up the Stroudwater river to the Gorham and Scarborough lines, and Munjoy Mill Square, otherwise called the Cooper claim, on the north side of the Presumpscot river.

Col. Samuel Waldo, son of Gen. Waldo, was the first Judge of Probate for Cumberland County, which was taken from York in 1760. He settled in Portland soon after leaving college in 1743. He was twice married and left several children, some of whose descendant are believed to be still living. He died in 1770. In 1753, he went to Germany in the interest of his father, and brought over a company of immigrants, who settled in the town of Waldoboro upon the Waldo patent. The history of this enterprise, especially in the misrepresentation

made to the poor colonists and the manner in which they were treated after reaching the shores of Maine, is alike discreditable to father and son.

Frances, the second son of Gen. Waldo was never married, having been jilted in an early love affair. When the collection district at Falmouth Neck was established he received the first appointment as collector of customs. Like most holders of office at the breaking out of the Revolutionary struggle, he took sides with the mother country and accordingly went to England and never returned.

From the college triennial we learn that he died in 1784.

Lucy Flucker, daughter of Thomas Flucker, secretary of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and his wife Hannah Waldo, became the wife of Henry Knox, a young man who at the time of their marriage plied the despicable handicraft of a book binder in the town of Boston. This alliance was anything but agreeable to the highborn and aristocratic kindred of the bride. But the humble merchant, who was a worthy representative of the young democracy of his time, lived to be one of the most distinguished of the Revolutionary generals and Secretary of War under President Washington, and it was this last named office which he resigned in 1795, for the purpose of indulging tastes not altogether republican. Mrs. Knox, by inheritance from her mother, was the owner of a large undivided interest in the Waldo patent. To this Geo. Knox added by purchase till he found himself in possession of what is now the larger part of Knox County. Laying down the duties and responsibilities of public life, he betook himself thither while still in his prime and selecting an eligible situation overlooking a bay of the Georges river, in the present town of Thomaston, he erected thereon the famous mansion house flanked on either hand by long rows of barns and outhouses. R.

TO BE CONTINUED.

HISTORY OF WESTBROOK

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1895

CHAPTER XVI. — CONTINUED.

Anecdote of Gen. Knox.—Hannah Waldo breaks off an engagement with Andrew Pepperell and marries Secretary Flucker.—The Winslow family of Westbrook.—The beginning of the Canning Industry.

The palatial residence of Thomaston was named "Montpelier" by Mrs. Knox, who, notwithstanding she had had the temerity to marry below the station of her family, was at no pains to conceal the pride that she felt in the rise of her husband to the high position which he now occupied in the young republic. And the spirit which she had displayed from her girlhood was an inheritance which she had received from her mother, Hannah Waldo. The latter, when a girl, had been engaged in marriage to young Andrew Pepperell, son and prospective heir of that Kittery baronet who had led the land forces of New England in the siege of Louisburg. Young Pepperell had been the classmate of her brother Samuel at Harvard, and the inclination which the young people manifested for each other had been matter of no little gratification to the parents on both sides who at this time were among the foremost people in the land. A day was set for the nuptials, but young Pepperell, for some reason which is not recorded, notified the bride-elect that a delay of three years would be necessary. To this the young woman consented and waited with all patience for the three years to go by; but when the phlegmatic suitor notified her that still another delay was necessary, she promptly broke off the engagement, and was led to the altar six weeks later by the Province Secretary, Thomas Flucker, to whom she seems to have been a model wife. Young Pepperell died a few months after this, and it may have been the consciousness that he was laboring under an incurable malady that occasioned his singular conduct in relation to what would have seemed so flattering marriage prospect. General Knox was the warm personal friend of Washington and although his human foibles and frailties are lost sight of with the lapse of years, it is probable that his daily conversation did not lack for the spice that history also accords to that of the first president.

An anecdote that is vouched for as true by high authority is worth recording. At one of those

elegant dinners given by Washington after he had come to the presidency, and which were presided over by his estimable wife, the pickled olives, now so common, but at that time almost unknown, were passed to Gen. Knox. The first trial of the new relish was quite enough for the valiant Secretary of War, who quickly taking the obnoxious fruit from his mouth, thus addressed himself to his hostess, "Please, Madam, may I put this d___ thing on the floor?"

Lucy Waldo, one of the daughters of Gen. Samuel Waldo, married as we have seen, Isaac Winslow of Roxbury. I have not learned to what branch of the famous family of the old colony this Isaac Winslow belonged. The first of the name who settled in old Falmouth were Nathaniel and James. The former who had the "sixty acre lot" below the grant made to Edward Shove at old Ammoncongan in 1732, is not known to have left any descendants. All of the name in this and the adjacent towns are supposed to be descendants of James, who was a grandson of Kenelm Winslow, son of Edward and brother of Governor Edward of the Plymouth colony. One branch of the family of this vicinity have traced and recorded their descent from Kenelm Winslow, and to this record I am indebted for the following facts: Kenelm Winslow, or Wincelow, born in England, arrived at Plymouth in 1629. In 1634 he married Eleanor Newton, the widow of John Adams, and settled in Marshfield. Job Winslow, son of Kenelm and Eleanor, settled in Freetown. James, the son of Job, born 9th of May, 1687, came to Falmouth, Maine, about 1728 and was granted lands at Back Cove, but subsequently settled near the Presumpscot river in the present town of Falmouth. He had a wife Elizabeth and sons: Nathan, born 1713, married Charity Hall; Job, born 1715, married Margaret Barbour; Benjamin, born 1717, married Hope Cobb; James, born 1725, married Annie Huston. He also had two daughters, who married respectively Hate-evil Hall and David Torrey.

James Winslow and his family were the first persons in Falmouth to unite with the Quakers which act of sacrilege (according to the views of good Parson Smith,) they committed about 1743. Three years before, 30th July 1740, the Parson tells us that "The church kept a day of fasting and prayer on account of the spread of Quakerism." The heresy that had been thought deserving of a halter a century earlier in Salem, had by this time broken out anew, but it does not seem to have found many converts in old Falmouth till the ministers and other rules of the dominant parish had taken active measures to prevent it from taking root. It is

probable, as Mr. Willis observes, that our pious ancestors were shocked at the idea of any person attempting to be more puritan than they were themselves. In fact the medium course which they had chosen they thought the only fit one to be pursued by others; therefore, when Mr. Wiswell who had begun his ministry as a Congregationalist became a Churchman in 1764, and immediately departed for England to receive ordination by apostolic succession "with the laying on of hands," Parson Smith, his deacon, and the more zealous of his church members were again sorely afflicted in spirit. Useful to an eminent degree, and eventful, was the long life of Mr. Smith, but thorny at times like that of every man who concedes only with the reluctance the same rights to others which he claims for himself, especially in matters of opinion; and there is no imagining what the good old man would say could he be advised of the lapse of his ancient church from the faith and creed of his day; and yet there is no spot of earth where his name and memory are more revered than within the somber stone edifice that stands upon the place where he so long and so earnestly ministered.

Many of the descendants of James Winslow still adhere to the simple faith which he imbibed from the broad-brimmed propagandists of his time; but not all of them have exhibited the most pacific spirit under strong provocations, it is related of one of them, that being challenged to a personal encounter by one with whom he differed in some matter of business, he promptly threw aside his drab coat with the injunction "Lie there Quaker," and soon proved to his antagonist that he had found a foeman worthy of his brawn.

Nathan Winslow, a son of Nathan and grandson of James, was the last clerk of the Falmouth Proprietors. He was born in 1743 and died in Westbrook in 1826. James Winslow the immigrant, died in 1773. To Nathan Winslow, long a leading business man in Portland, belongs the credit of having inaugurated what is now a colossal industry in most parts of the United States and Canada, the preservation of food products in his cans by what is known as the process of hermetically sealing. In this connection it is worthy of mention that the first sweet corn ever canned for the market was so canned by Mr. Winslow in what was then a woodshed at Cumberland Mills, and that the building is still standing in a greatly modified form having been incorporated into the present dwelling house of Mr. Alfred H. Larrabee.

R.

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