

HISTORY OF WELLS AND KENNEBUNK.

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If you do not come in 5 days, you will not see me, for Captain Nathaniel, the Indian, will not stay no longer, for the Canada Indian is not willing for to sell me. Pray, Sir, don't fail, for they have given me one day, for the days were but 4 at first. Give my kind love to my dear wife.

This from your dutiful son till death,

ELISHA PLAISTEAD."

Plaistead was finally redeemed, it is said, in the Massachusetts Historical Collections, for three hundred pounds; but the foregoing letter does not bring much support to that statement. One acquainted with the existing state of the finances of the inhabitants of Wells, can hardly believe that there was so much money in the whole town.

Thus we have reached the close of another ten years' bloody war. Wells was not again disturbed by these savage raids. The Indians desired peace, and the next year, 1713, another treaty was signed, they giving the most solemn assurances that they would not again take up arms against the English.

During this war (in 1712), died FRANCIS LITTLEFIELD, aged 93. We have already referred to his strange disappearance from his father's family in England, when only eleven or twelve years old. He may have again met his father in Exeter in 1640; for beside Goodman Littlefield, the father, who had twenty acres of land there assigned him, another Goodman Littlefield had an assignment of four acres. This, we think, may have been Francis, who became of age in 1640. Anthony was a younger son. When Wheelwright and the other members of the combination were driven from Exeter by the extension of Massachusetts jurisdiction over that territory, instead of coming to Wells with his father, Francis went to Woburn, Mass., where he was taxed in 1646, and where, by his wife Jane, he had a daughter Mary, born Dec. 14, of that year. We know not the parentage of this wife. She died on the 20th. He probably then removed to Dover, which he represented in the Legislature in 1648. We do not find him at Wells till after 1650; in 1648, he was married to Rebecca, the mother of all his children, whose names appear on

record. We conclude that there is no foundation for the current report that the father first found him settled on a farm in Wells.

He was a small boy when he left his father's house, and what could have induced this unnatural act, apparently voluntary on his part, we do not know; but it is remarkable, that, when in advanced youth, he must have known that his mysterious disappearance would cause great anxiety to his parents, he should have refrained from giving them any information of himself and his prospects. We conclude, that for some reason, his attachment to them must have been exceedingly weak. This dereliction of filial obligation might all disappear on a full knowledge of facts. The freaks of boyhood do not always indicate the subsequent character of the man; notwithstanding this apparent inconsistency with a true manhood, Littlefield maintained a fair position among the settlers of Wells. From the nature of his business, his acquaintance was extensive. He kept a public house; that is, so far as to accommodate travelers who were then following the seaboard in pursuit of a location at the eastward. He does not seem to have been very punctilious in his regard for law; he was licensed to sell spirituous liquors for one year; but he continued to sell after his license expired, and had difficulty in obtaining a renewal, although he promised not again to be guilty of such a violation of law. He was elected as a Representative of York in 1668; he was also Representative from Wells in 1665 and 1676, and became a strong supporter of the claims of Massachusetts. Savage speaks of him as a leader in that contest. The General Court held its sessions at his house. His part in the complication of Mr. Bass and Mrs. Eldridge was not such as a sound morality would countenance; but his version of the affair has not come down to us. He was recognized by the inhabitants of Wells as a sound man; and he lived to a good old age, which affords some evidence of a conscientious and satisfactory life.

That our readers may understand that the influence of a man at this period did not depend on his pecuniary status, we append an account of his property, as exhibited in the inventory of his estate, of which the following is a copy:

usual thus to designate plantations; but the name was given to this beyond the period of which we have any record. In a recent publication it is said that the town derives its name from one of its early settlers, Thomas Wells, who came here from Ipswich; but this statement is entirely destitute of foundation. Thomas Wells did not come here till 1657, fifteen years after we find the name applied. Judge Wells, a descendant of Thomas, was accustomed to state it as his opinion that the great number of springs with which it abounds suggested its name; but we are not aware that there are more springs in this than in the towns adjoining, and if there were, when it received its name, the wilderness being unbroken, but few of them could have been discovered. Others have said, and with much more reason, that it was given by Gorges, according to a custom, then common, to apply the names of well-known places in the old country to new places of residence here. Wells was an important city in England, and not far from the residence of Gorges in Somersetshire. Cardinal Woolsey resided there. It was much distinguished for its many public buildings, and it was probably this prominence which led Hubbard, in his History of New England, thus to speak of the application of the name to this plantation: "Between Cape Porpoise and Piscataqua," he says, "there are but two small towns more (though ambitious of great names), the one called Wells, the other York." As he was then living in New England, it is probable that he well understood the reason why this name was given. As this city, also, was within twenty miles of Gorges' residence, some of its inhabitants were, perhaps, influenced by him to come over here, and one of the inducements offered might have been that the name of the old home would go with them to their new settlement.

Owing to the different titles set up, by parties in interest, to the plantation previously to its incorporation, no one could foresee what might be the final adjudication by competent authority. The political and social condition of the people and the general aspect of affairs in this unsettled state of the title presented nothing attractive to those who were anxious to select a permanent residence. During the ten years succeeding the beginning of a settlement here it does not appear that it made very rapid progress. Oblivion has taken to itself the larger part of the history of this period. By the unfortunate burning of the house of Joseph Bowles, in 1657, one of the

volumes of the town records was destroyed, so that we have no means of ascertaining the grants which had been made, or possessions taken and confirmed, excepting so far as we have found copies of these records, or tenants in the occupation of what had been allotted to them. In the period named between thirty and forty persons had here made a home; but previously to 1653 some of them had removed to New Hampshire, the advantages offered in that province being more alluring than any which they could expect to enjoy by continuing in Wells.

The following persons appear to have been inhabitants during the continuance of the plantation: Samuel Austin, John Barret, John Barret, jr., Stephen Batson, Henry Boade, Robert Boothe, Joseph Bowles, John Bush, Nicholas Cole, William Cole, Joseph Emerson, John Gooch, William Hammond, Ezekiel Knight, Edmund Littlefield, Anthony Littlefield, Francis Littlefield, Francis Littlefield, jr., John Littlefield, Thomas Littlefield, Thomas Miles, Philemon Portmotte, Edward Rishworth, John Sanders, Jonathan Thinge, John Wakefield, William Wardell, Rev. John Wheelright, Thomas Wheelright, William Wentworth, John Wadleigh, John White.

Whether Nicholas Needham, Edward Hutchinson, or Augustine Story ever resided in Wells cannot now be determined. We have no evidence that any allotment of land was made to either of them; but the foregoing inhabitants, whom we have named, are to be regarded as the founders of Wells. There was great variety of character among them; some were good and worthy, while others had not much to boast of in their moral composition. A want of education, it is believed, was at the root of all their obliquities. A vast proportion of the wickedness of earth has its origin in the same cause. Of many of these settlers a more full biography will be given in the course of this work.

Stephen Batson, Robert Boothe, Philemon Portmotte, or Portmotte, Rev. John Wheelright, and William Wentworth removed from the plantation before its incorporation as a town. Batson was the first occupant of Drake's Island. Here he built his house, the cellar of which is still to be seen, the house having been gone many years. In the middle of the cellar, a few years ago, stood the remains of an old oak tree, which had sprung up after the house had been taken away, grown to a good old age, and then was left of its branches, nothing remaining but its lifeless trunk. Batson might