

FRIDAY OF NEXT

SEVENTH OF NEXT

16

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Early Westbrook History

CHAPTER 8. THE PROCTORS OF WESTBROOK. — EARLY SETTLERS, AND PLAN OF LOTS NEAR PRIDE'S BRIDGE — JOHN SNOW AND CAPT. JOHN WAITE — JOHN COX, AND HIS NUMEROUS FAMILY.

(By F. M. Ray.)

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 have been 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, 1707, and November, 1719, and built his house on Fore street, between Market (formerly Elm) and Silver streets. He was born, no doubt, in Salem Village, in 1680, and came hither from Lynn, where he probably lived with 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 making up the several papers by the name of Proctor are mentioned, this showing that in the second half of the 18th century the name was quite common in the vicinity of the present Prides Corner.

William, the fifth child of Samuel and Mary (Brackett) Proctor, born August, 31, 1724, married Charity Lunt in 1750, and Susannah Hart 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 1775 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 mile from the Presumpscot River, together with an eighth of a mill privilege on 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 residence of the late Nathan E. Bowdy. A bridge once crossed the Presumpscot River in this vicinity, about a eighth of a mile above Prides Bridge and was called Proctor's Bridge. William Proctor died in 1806. He had a son, John, Jr., who was a member of the 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, June 24, 1745, resided until he removed his residence prior to 1778; for in that year he conveyed 35 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 a 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 the S. D. Warren Co. He left sons, Samuel A., Richard, Charles, Henry and John, and several daughters one of the latter having been the wife of Charles Babb.

I have before me as I write, a plan which accounts for its own origin and existence as follows:

"This is a Plan or Description of certain 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 Thomas Brackett, chairman, and by desire of Capt. John Waite and Mr. John Snow have faithfully and impartially surveyed, December 25, 1753. 'Attest: John Small, surveyor.'

On this place a small tributary of the Presumpscot, presumably the present Mill Brook, is 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 stream 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 1732. According to the late Mr. Willis, he had by her and two other wives, a family of 20 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 thereto, is a tract of 43 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 William Walker farm, adjacent to Cox's land, on the westerly side is a tunnel-shaped tract of 47 acres, also laid out to Joseph Conant; and immediately to the westward of this is a tract of 60 acres laid out to Ebenezer Cobb; while below Conant's tract of 43 acres is a lot of 13 acres laid out to Capt. Waite on the right of Isaac Sawyer. Below the last named is a tract of 60 acres which belonged to Mr. John Snow, he being the 'assign' of Timothy Worcester, 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 100 acres laid out to Joseph Pride. The next easterly is a tract of 33 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.

John Snow appears to have been an early settler in the vicinity of Prides Bridge, and an enterprising man of business in his time. It was probably his daughter, Mary, who married Thomas Brackett in 1743; and probably, too, Brackett was the same who served at the survey as one of the chainmen. 'To ye Selectmen of ye town of Falmouth:

According to ye vote of ye Town wee the subscribers to choose ye stream lying Between perscatquis and Ammoncongan upon the N. E. sid of presumpscot River as witness our hands. This our report to the Selectmen of Falmouth. Dated at Falmouth July ye 12, 1728.

Samuel Proctor.
John Berry.
Edward Armstrong.
Saml. McCausland.

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 than that 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 name in this vicinity. The stream which was subsequently known as 'Proctor's mill stream' 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 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 wife in 1747 in an encounter with the Indians at Fennaquid. He and his son John were both sea captains.

I have learned since the first part of this chapter was written that John Snow was by trade a ship carpenter, and had his residence near Back Cove in the former city of Deering. Captain George Berry, one of the chainmen at the survey of the lands near Prides Bridge was a brother of John Snow's wife, while the other chairman, Thomas Brackett, was his son-in-law. Brackett's home was what is now Portland, near Morrills Corner; and the farm of Snow embraced the land formerly owned and occupied by the late John Read as his homestead on Ocean street.

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

Oct. 17, 1734, the same parties laid out to Proctor 43 acres on the northerly side of Presumpscot River "beginning of the stake standing 14 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 in this grant might be shown upon the plan already mentioned, but in fact, it is not there.

Jan. 12, 1736-7 o. s., another tract of 30 acres is laid out to Proctor on the northerly side of the Presumpscot which, also, does not appear upon the plan. 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, has 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 that vicinity has little value except for agricultural purposes.

Among the names in the Lunt Ledger is that of Peletiah March, to whom two pages are accorded in this report, but I presume it was somewhere within our present city limits. The original patrons does not prove that he lived in the vicinity of Prides 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 boots and shoes of his customers and their families. Peletiah March was born April 7, 1741, in Amesbury, Mass. In December, 1772, he purchased a house lot in Portland of John Proctor. His transactions with Lunt began 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, September 15, 1776, Mary, widow of John Brackett of Saccarappa. His children, 11 in all, were as follows:

- 1. 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 Weare.'
 - 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 parents of the late Col. John

M. Frye of Lewiston and grandparents of the late William P. Frye, United States senator. Mrs. Anna (March) Frye is said to have been one week old at the burning of Portland by Moffitt.

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 Jacoberry of Falmouth. Their son, Peletiah, Gerry, was formerly a leading merchant of 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 give 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 owned and occupied by the late Mrs. Susan S. Conant.

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

The task of tracing the several families of Bracketts who have resided 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 gentlemen who has found out more of those matters by patient and careful delving of the records than anyone else in this vicinity.

Within a few years past a very excellent history of the Brackett families of this vicinity, entitled, Brackett Genealogy, Descendants of Anthony of Portland and Captain Richard of Braintree, by Herbert I. Brackett of Washington, D. C., has been published. (To be Continued.)

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Citation:

"Westbrook, Cumberland, Maine, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-B35C-XVF8?view=fullText> : May 7, 2025), image 815 of 1297; .

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