# PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

# DEDICATION OF A MONUMENT

TO

# SERGEANT ABRAHAM STAPLES

OF

MENDON, MASSACHUSETTS,

*October 31, 1877.*

PROVIDENCE
SIDNEY S. RIDER.
1880.

# ACCOUNT OF THE SERVICES.

The completion of a monument to the memory of Sergeant Abraham Staples of Mendon, appeared to some of his descendants a fitting occasion for commemorative notice. Accordingly they determined to bring together at Mendon as many as possible of those who trace their lineage back to him, and to recognize in suitable services the worth of their common ancestor, and the tie which unites them in one family.

The day appointed for the gathering was not altogether propitious; clouds overspread the sky at an early hour, threatening a storm; the air was chilly and the rain came pouring down in earnest before the conclusion of the ceremonies.

But the interest in the occasion was so great that this did not prevent a large attendance of the Staples family and of the towns-people. Many branches of the family in Massachusetts and Rhode Island were represented, and the congregation in the old First Parish meeting-house probably numbered three or four hundred.

The services were opened with music by the Waterford band, followed by an invocation from Rev. George

F. Clark of Mendon. Hon. Hamilton B. Staples of Worcester, a lineal descendant of Sergeant Abraham, in the sixth generation, then gave the Introductory Address; Rev. Edward L. Drown of Newburyport, read appropriate selections from the Scriptures and offered prayer.

The hymn, so popular with our ancestors of a century and a half ago,

"Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old;"

was sung to the tune of St. Martin's by the choir and congregation. Then followed the Commemorative Address, by Rev Carlton A. Staples of Providence, R. I., also a lineal descendant of Sergeant Abraham in the fifth generation; the services concluding at the church with the Doxology,

"From all that dwell below the skies,"

sung to the tune of Hebron. A procession was then formed by the Marshal of the day, Joseph H. Wood, Esq., of Milford, and marched to the monument in the old burying ground. Here the members of the family gathered close around the memorial stone, above the dust of their common ancestors, while a dedicatory prayer was offered by Rev. C. A. Staples; a hymn, written for the occasion by Miss Sarah L. Staples of Mendon, was sung to the tune of Old Hundred, and the Benediction pronounced by Rev. E. L. Drown.

The rain, which commenced falling during these services at the monument, hurried the company to the

Town Hall, where a bountiful dinner had been provided. The divine blessing was invoked by Rev. Mr. Clark, and while the band discoursed sweet music the members of the family did ample justice to the repast before them. After an hour spent in refreshing the exhausted body, Judge Putnam of Uxbridge, called the company to order, and in a graceful speech congratulated the family upon the interesting occasion which had brought them together. He alluded in impressive and eloquent words to the late Rev. N. A. Staples, of Brooklyn, N. Y., whose birthplace was in Mendon, and whose body was laid to rest there. He closed by introducing Hon. Henry Staples of Providence, R. I., son of the late Chief Justice Wiliam R. Staples of that State, who spoke of the satisfaction which the meeting had given him and expressed the wish that the proceedings might be published, and that similar gatherings of the family might be held in coming years. He was followed by Rev. Mr. Drown, who gave several pleasing reminiscences of Judge Staples, illustrating the spotless purity and the noble simplicity of his character. Mr. E. B. Crane of the Society of Antiquity in Worcester, spoke on the interest and value of Genealogical studies. Mr. C. J. Staples, of the Senior class in Brown University, and J. H. Wood, Esq., spoke on behalf of the younger members of the family. These speeches were interspersed with music, and in "the feast of reason and flow of soul" the hours passed swiftly away until the evening shadows began to fall and the members of the family were compelled to say, "good bye," in the hope of meeting at last in the great home above.

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# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT

*Mendon, October 31, 1877,*

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION OF A

# MONUMENT TO SERGEANT ABRAHAM STAPLES.

BY

HAMILTON B. STAPLES.

# INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

KINSFOLK AND FRIENDS:

One hundred and seventy-four years ago to-day, with allowance for the change of style, Abraham Staples died in Mendon, aged sixty-five years. He was one of the original proprietors and settlers of the town, and after its destruction in King Philip's war, he lived to see it re-established and secure from Indian hostility.

His will bears evidence that his health was long infirm and that he approached the end of a weary life with a serene religious faith. A few days after his death, his beloved pastor, the Rev. Grindall Rawson, an eminent scholar and divine, attended his funeral, and men long associated with him in the hardships and perils of the new settlement bore him to his burial. His grave in the old burying-ground was marked by a stone rudely dressed and inscribed, which has for nearly two centuries withstood the ravages of time.

There the old man has slept on, undisturbed and almost forgotten, while the tides of human woe have year after year flowed in at the gate of the old cemetery, while vestige after vestige of the old town has been swept away, while families prominent in their day for

numbers and influence have risen and decayed, and the eventful drama of the interlaced life of five generations has here been played out.

The place of the grave was fitly chosen. He lies not in the corner nor by the side of the enclosure, but in the centre, surrounded by the later generations for whom he came here to prepare the way.

When I saw his grave a month ago, and before the monument was set, it was level with the natural surface of the ground and covered with the same faded green turf. The half-sunken stone leaned wearily and the inscription upon it was half effaced. The stone fronted "towards the sun rising," the direction of his early home in Weymouth, a position unusual in the cemetery and perhaps in accordance with his wishes.

The inscription is a model of simplicity, merely the name, the mild title of "Sergeant," the dates of his birth and of his death. In an age when the prevailing taste carved on tomb-stones hideous emblems of death, queer comments on the dead, or sepulchral counsel to the living, this inscription is exceptional in its brevity and fitness. It reflects the plain character and sterling worth of the man, and equally the good sense and affection of his children.

As we look at this ancient stone, imagination travels over a broad tract of time. His birth was eleven years before the execution of King Charles the First, his death was in the second year of Queen Anne. He lived in the age when the great struggle between popular rights and kingly prerogative, so long doubtful, ended in the triumph of freedom. He was contemporary with

some of the Pilgrim Fathers, and may have seen in his time, Miles Standish, Eliot, the apostle to the Indians, Roger Williams and King Philip.

His grave was nearly a century old when old Mortality was at work with his chisel on the tomb-stones of the covenanters in Dumfries and Ayr.

The relative age of the oldest inscribed burial stones in the county is an interesting inquiry. In the "Old Common Burying Ground," in Lancaster, a town settled fourteen years before Mendon, there are five stones supposed to be the oldest in that town, bearing date respectively: 1684, 1697, 1697, 1698, and 1700. There is one of Deborah Read, dated 1702 in the old grave-yard in Mendon. This of Abraham Staples is the next in age. In the town of Brookfield, settled soon after Mendon, there is no inscribed stone of so early a date. In the oldest burying-ground in Worcester, settled still later, the first burial was in 1717. Thus the grave-stone of our ancestor is among the seven of the earliest date in the county, and excluding Lancaster, is the oldest but one in date.

Some of the descendants of Abraham Staples, actuated by a desire to perpetuate his memory by a more lasting memorial than this dilapidated stone was likely to prove, have erected the monument which we have now met, as a family, to consecrate with religious rites. The structure is plain but enduring in material and construction. The granite column quarried out of the earth here, harmonizes with the qualities of character possessed by the early settlers of New England, simplicity, strength, and a certain hardness or severity. It

rests on a deep laid foundation prepared in the most solid manner. It is curious to conjecture how long it may stand to tell its simple story. Two centuries hence it may serve to fix the site of the old burying-ground itself. In the natural course of things it will endure as long as the strongest monuments of our time, and if Macaulay's traveller from New Zealand, after sketching the ruins of St. Paul's from a broken arch of London bridge, should chance to return home this way, we hope he will find it standing firm on its base.

The occasion derives added interest from the fact that this memorial will not stand for Abraham Staples alone. He happens to be the only one of the original proprietors of the town whose grave is known and identified. Happily God knows where the others have mouldered into dust, for "in His book are all their members written." Twenty-three in all and but one grave rescued from oblivion; twenty-three in all, and but one tomb-stone to recall by its faded inscription the historic roll. In inscribing on this monument, that he was one of the original proprietors and settlers, we make him the representative of the men who shared together the toils and dangers of the settlement, and in him, they will all in a sense be remembered.

In a more general aspect, this service will not be in vain if it stimulates in any degree the interest now taken in the local history of New England. The revival of the historic spirit in the country is unmistakable. It has saved Mount Vernon to the nation and will save "the Old South"; it has poured a new glory upon the centennial anniversaries of Lexington, Con-

cord, Bunker Hill, Bennington and Saratoga; it gave rise to the great exhibition of 1876; it has covered the land with monuments to perpetuate the names of our fallen soldiers, and there are signs that the same spirit has reached the humbler sphere of local history. Histories of counties and towns are now in vogue. The historian is busy exploring the sources of local history in town and family records, in registries of deeds and of wills, in antiquated houses and deserted grave-yards, the spirit of genealogical research is also awakened; in every old family of colonial descent, some one is at work tracing out the lines of relationship and placing the results of his researches in printed form. The Antiquarian Society at Worcester has given a powerful and intelligent impulse to the cause. It has collected and preserved the materials of both general and local history in such abundance and variety as to supply the ever expanding wants of an educated age.

The erection and dedication of this monument is an humble tribute to the historic movement of the age. By this means we would fain call attention to the importance of recovering from the feeble grasp of tradition or the crumbling lines of ancient tomb-stones, the information which serves to identify the graves of the founders of the original towns of New England. Their work was the leaven of the whole body politic. What is this Commonwealth but the aggregate and ripened fruit of these early settlements in the dim aisles of the wilderness, and who are the real founders of the State? Not alone the men who landed at Plymouth and Boston and Salem, but those as well who penetrated far into the

interior and planted feeble settlements in the forest clearings, too far apart to lend each other assistance against the ruthless savage, or to alleviate the gloom of such a life, who lived in daily and hourly dread of the torch and the tomahawk and found nature as inhospitable as man.

And what a claim to remembrance have also the men and women, the earliest martyrs of civilization in Massachusetts, who perished in the principal Indian massacres, which lightly touched the seaboard but fell on the exposed inland settlements with destructive fury.

And how has this claim upon the gratitude of posterity been answered? Not in Lancaster, nor in Mendon, nor in Brookfield, nor in Worcester is there a single inscribed stone to mark the spot where any of these sufferers lie. In respect to Lancaster, the Rev. Dr. Marvin writes, under date of October 27, 1877: "No ancient stone bearing an inscription marks the grave of any who fell in the massacre. No modern stone marks any such grave. There is no tradition nor shadow of tradition in regard to the place where the victims of the massacre were buried. It seems incredible but inquiries in many directions elicit nothing but blank ignorance in regard to what must have been well known to at least three generations of people living here."

The case of Mendon is no better. The names and place of burial of the five men killed here July 14, 1675, are alike unknown, and yet Cotton Mather wrote of the day of this massacre, "This deserves to have a remark set upon it, considering that blood was never

shed in Massachusetts Colony in a way of hostility before this day."

In old Brookfield the names of Captain Ayres and the rest who fell into that fatal ambuscade August 2, 1675, are known, but their place of burial is a matter of rather obscure tradition.

In Worcester, Dickery Sargent and his family, famous for an heroic but hopeless resistance to the Indians, rest in unknown and unhonored graves.

Nor is the meed of commemoration justly withheld from those who fell in the military service of the time. Captain Lothrop and his men deserve the monument to their valor and misfortune which marks the spot at Deerfield where they fell, but there are others besides "the Flower of Essex," who were not "ashamed to speak with the enemy in the gate." Captain Hutchinson and his men who fell in the defence of Brookfield, and young Lieutenant Curtis, mortally wounded in storming the wigwam at Hassanamisset, shall not a monument be set on each scene of death as a perpetual witness to self-sacrificing valor? All these, the founders, martyrs, and slain defenders of this ancient heritage deserve a better fate than to be forgotten by those who "have entered into their labors" and sufferings.

Many of their graves are hopelessly lost. Some may yet be discovered and marked with a permanent memorial. Where the grave is unknown, the name can be honored with the same token of remembrance; and where neither grave nor name is known, let the historic deed be inscribed in enduring characters. Many his-

torical spots are becoming uncertain and need to be perpetuated "even with a pillar of stone." Thus the hills and dells, the cemeteries and market-places of the towns of New England may become eloquent with the deeds of our heroic ancestors, and the present be imbued with the noblest spirit of the past.

To this work of commemoration, so long neglected, so urgent in its appeal to the best sentiments of our nature, we have come to-day as a family to dedicate ourselves in dedicating this humble monument to one of the founders of Mendon.

The occasion naturally assumes the character of a family meeting. In that aspect of it I am happy to welcome here all the descendants of Abraham Staples now met to do him honor. Not a visible thing remains clothed with his near personality save his will and his grave. We shall look in vain for his arm-chair, his Bible, his hearth-stone, but we can see the site of his dwelling, the lines of landed occupation continued from him in his family to this day, the town of his planting now broken into a bright cluster of towns. We can see the same configuration of the land that he saw; the same winding courses of brook and river; the same fine eastern view; the same beautiful sheet of water; the same lovely tints of the sky.

The mystic chords of descent, stretching down from him to each of us, vibrate in sweet concord when touched by the hand of memory. We meet in the pleasing sense of a common ancestry, the realization that after all our divergences, here is the spot of our origin, here the name that links us with a noble line,

the original settlers of our beloved State. We feel the impulse of kindred blood joining us in a great family circle never before assembled, and filling the hours with fascination. May a name and an association so honorable be to all the descendants of the old settler not only an incentive to noble living but a bond of mutual interest and affection so long as this monument shall endure.

# AN HISTORICAL ADDRESS

AT THE DEDICATION OF A

# MONUMENT TO SERGEANT ABRAHAM STAPLES,

OF MENDON, MASS.,

*Wednesday, October 31, 1877.*

BY

CARLTON A. STAPLES, OF PROVIDENCE, R. I.

# ADDRESS.

Mr. President, Kinsfolk and Friends:

On the occasion which has brought us together when I am expected to speak upon the history of the Staples family, and especially upon the life of Sergeant Abraham Staples, one of the original proprietors and settlers of this town, it may be reasonably demanded of me to show how we came by the name which we bear. The surname, as you know, was added to the Christian name to designate specifically a certain family, and it was originally derived from the occupation, the place of residence, or some peculiar characteristic, moral or physical, of the individual to whom it was applied. Thus John, the smith, came to be John Smith; William the carpenter, William Carpenter; George, the cook, George Cook; Henry of the little field, Henry Littlefield; James of the strong arm, James Armstrong; Thomas, who, as the story runs, met a wild beast and killed it, which he said was no more than killing a calf, Thomas Metcalf; Peter, by the bridges, Peter Bridges; and so of thousands of surnames, they are easily traced to an occupation, a place of residence, a peculiarity of

body, mind or character, or some circumstance in the history of the individual who first bore it. How then, came we by the name "Staples"?

You will readily think of the loop of iron having two points, and driven into a wall or post as a fastening, John, who made the staple, or who invented this kind of a fastening, became naturally enough "John Staple"; for so the name was generally written until within the last hundred and fifty years. You will remember that the word staple also signifies a chief production, or commodity of a country. This use of the word originated in England when certain articles of export were brought to certain towns where the export duties were collected for the king; such a port was called a staple, and the articles themselves staples. Now as wool was one of the principal commodities, it came to be called the staple, and the building where the wool merchants had their shops, Staple Inn, Staple Court, or Staple Market. An assorter of wool was called a stapeler, and our name was often written in this way, as may be seen in the earliest records of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths in this country. John the stapler, thus became John Stapler, which was ultimately changed to Staple and then to Staples. Off the eastern coast of Scotland where it bounds on England, are islands designated on the maps as the Staple Isles, a name which may have been derived from the fact of the great production of wool in those islands. It is a tradition that the family originally came from "The Staple Isles," taking the name possibly from some William of Staple Isles, who became known as "William Staple."

In Burke's history of the Landed Gentry of England it is stated under the head "Staples," that "this family is of considerable antiquity, and that the name has been variously written, Staple, Stapel, Stapelle, and Stapul." A number of persons are mentioned of the name who belonged to the nobility of England, and the different coats of arms which they bore are described. The family in Ireland had a coat of arms which indicates that the name originated in the idea of the *staple*, a stanchion or fastening. Thomas Staples was created a Baronet of Ireland in July, 1628. The crest on his coat of arms is described as "a demi-negro holding a bolt-staple." A branch of the family in England has upon its coat of arms four staples, and another, three staples, all showing pretty conclusively the supposed origin of the name. But whether it be the idea of a fastening or of a trading post, or of a commodity, the name certainly signifies something substantial, useful, essential to man's security and happiness. The world cannot do without staples or fastenings of some kind, nor can it dispense with the great staple of clothing with which our name has been for centuries honorably associated. A guild of wool merchants in London, holding their charter from King Edward III., about 1450, is called The Staple, wool then being the staple of the country.

But we must look a little further before we shall get at the whole truth. On the coast of France opposite the white cliffs of Dover, in the department of Calais, on an arm of the sea a little southwest of Boulogne, is a small village bearing the singular name, "Etaples," a name which was formerly written Estaples; some time

during the last six or seven hundred years the "s" in this name has been dropped and the name written Etaples. Now it is quite probable, nay, almost certain, that a branch of the family originated here and is therefore of French origin, taking the surname from their place of residence. The first idea of this theory came to me while reading an account of the invasion of England by William the Conqueror, in Hume's history; there we read that William, Duke of Normandy, before resolving on the expedition which gave him a kingdom and changed the destiny of the English race, called together his chief nobility for consultation. Among the names there given is that of Hugh d' Estaples, which of ccurse means Hugh of Estaples, the seat of his family. Here in 1066 was his castle; on these plains was his estate and around the castle grew up a village peopled by his vassals and dependants. A work on British names, which I have recently seen, under the head Staples, says this name is "said to be derived from Estaples, now Etaples, a small seaport of France eleven miles from Boulogne." In confirmation of this theory, I may say that the earliest mention of the name in English history, just five hundred years ago, when a man by the name of Staples was Lord mayor of London, gives it as Staples and not Staple, that is, the name of this French village and not the name of a commodity or a fastening; and besides, the coat of arms of one branch of the family in England bore the motto in French, "*Sans Dieu rien*," "Nothing without God." As the mottoes of English families were generally in Latin, if not in their own tongue, it is

probable that this motto in French indicates the French origin of those who bore it.

What became of "Hugh d' Estaples," one of William's chief nobility, I have never been able to ascertain. That he took an active part in fitting out the great expedition of the Conquest, furnishing men or ships, is to be inferred from the history, though not positively stated. But in the list of those engaged in the battle of Hastings, preserved in Battle Abbey which William erected on the spot where the English king fell and which contains the names of the survivors as well as those of the dead, that of Hugh d' Estaples is not found. So he vanishes from history with this single mention of his name among the chief nobility of Normandy.

Five hundred years later, however, we find a "Lefevre d' Etaples," one of the leading Huguenot writers and scholars of France, "who is described as the link connecting ancient times with modern history, the man in whom the transition is made from the theology of the Middle Ages to the theology of the Reformation, one of the bold, independent thinkers who helped to lead the Protestant party in the great struggles of that period."

From the information which I have thus been able to collect regarding the family name, I think we may fairly conclude that there were at least two branches of the family, one English and one French, in its origin; that the latter is to be traced back eight hundred years to the ancient French village Estaples, the place of their residence, and that while the name of the village has retained the initial E and dropped the s, making it

Etaples, the name of the family has dropped the E and retained the other letters in full, making it "Staples"; while the name of the English branch originated in the iron hook used for a fastening with which the ancestor of the family was some how connected, perhaps not voluntarily; or in the great commodity, wool, in the sale, or preparation for market, or manufacture of which, some long forgotten John or William was engaged, and who came to be designated as John or William Staple, Stapler or Stapul; and that this branch can be traced back at least five hundred years to the time of Edward III., in which the great merchant guild of wool dealers was established, but that both branches are now so intermingled that the differences in the spelling of the name have disappeared.

I have now accounted for our family name so far as I can, and shown that when Burke said that "The Staples family has considerable antiquity," he stated a fact capable of the fullest demonstration.

My next step will be to get the family fairly across the ocean and planted in the wilderness of America. In many of the seaport towns of England lists were made of the names of all passengers in ships sailing to America during the period of the early settlement, and these lists have been preserved in the Admiralty office of Great Britain. But no list that has yet been published or examined contains the name Staple or Staples, except two, both of which contain the name "Leonard Staples," the first of whom, in 1635, was transported to Barbadoes, after having taken the oath of allegiance; probably a man convicted of some offence against King

Charles I., who was then awakening the disaffection among his subjects which finally cost him his head. Leonard Staples was then twenty-two years of age; and curiously enough, just fifty years afterwards, in 1685, another Leonard Staples was convicted of being engaged in the Monmouth Rebellion against James II., and was transported from Taunton by Captain John Rose in the ship Alexander, also to Barbadoes; he was then twenty years old. Resistance to tyrants evidently runs in the Staples blood. What became of these men I have no means of determining. They may have come from Barbadoes to New England, the relations between the two countries being then very close. But neither of these men will account for our ancestry's being here, even if they came to New England, and this name, as I have said, is the only Staples name found on any passenger list. So we must accept the fact that somehow our family got itself planted in this country at an early date, by what means history has not yet disclosed. The first pair may have crossed the ocean in an open boat as Captain Crapo and his wife did last summer. But of this fact there can be no question; there were three families, perhaps four, of the name, living here as early as 1636 or '37. They seem not to have started in America from a single pair, the commonly accepted theory of the origin of species, but from several pairs scattered over a considerable territory, which is Agassiz's theory of the origin of species. Three pairs at least, and probably four, were settled here in good family ways at about the same time, viz.: John, Geofrey, and Joseph Staple of Weymouth, Massachusetts, and Samuel Staple of Braintree.

In a division of lands made in Weymouth apparently under date of 1636, I find that John Staple had "six acres assigned him in the plain, and three acres in the East field," and Joseph Staple had "three acres in the East field, and six acres at the farthest end of Harris's lot at the West Plain," and in a second division of land in 1651, I find among those entitled to great lots, Jeffrey or Geoffrey and John Staple, but not the name of Joseph who had drawn lots in the first. He had probably removed to Taunton sometime between 1636 and 1651. But Jeffrey Staple whose name appears on this list of 1651, had died four years before, as appears from the inventory of his estate in the Suffolk county records bearing date of 1647; probably it was put on the list to enable his family to share in the division.

We have, therefore, the Staples tribe fairly fixed and rooted in the soil of Weymouth, somewhere about 1636, and apparently three families are there. John had a daughter Rebecca born in 1637; a son Abraham, in 1638 or 1639; a son Joseph in 1641, and another Joseph in 1647; there was another daughter, Sarah, and another son, John, of whose births there is no record. Martha Staple, a daughter of Jeffrey died in 1639, while Joseph Staple drew land in the division of 1636, showing conclusively that these three men were there during this period. At about the same time Samuel Staple was living in Braintree, an adjoining town, and children were born to him from 1655 to 1670. Possibly he may have been a son of Jeffrey.

But I now leave all these families, of whose relationship to each other I have no definite knowledge, though

probably three of them were brothers, to fasten upon a single family, namely, that of John Staple whose fortunes I am partially to sketch. Let us pause here for a moment and take a look at the place where the family of John Staple was located. It is known now as North Weymouth, ten miles from Boston on the south shore and three miles east of the village of Quincy, formerly a part of Braintree. A small river taking its rise near the Blue Hill, here flows into the sea, and near its mouth is a village of fishermen and traders called "Old Spain." Back of the village for half a mile to the south stretches a sandy plain, bounded on the southwest by a noble elevation, called from the earliest time "King Oak Hill." This hill is a striking object in the landscape, rising by a gentle slope to an elevation of two or three hundred feet, bare of trees, but to the summit covered with luxuriant vegetation, and sheltering on its sunny slopes beautiful farm houses, with their gardens, orchards and fields. From the rounded crest of King Oak Hill there is, in all directions, a varied and fascinating view: to the north rise the domes, spires, and roofs of Boston, its harbor dotted with islands and the white wings of commerce; while the headlands and light-houses that mark the boundaries of the sea, reach away to the east and south. Inland the range of the Blue Hills fills the western horizon, and the country between is one wide sweep of forest and meadow, divided by ridges and sprinkled over with busy, prosperous villages. So it appeared on a glorious day of mid-summer, three years since, when I visited it. Close at the foot of King Oak Hill, and a little to

the west, stands the meeting-house of the first church in Weymouth, and near it is the old burying-ground, where the dust of our first ancestors in America reposes. It is a region full of historic interest; here in this plain probably occurred that encounter of Captain Miles Standish with the Indians, when, with his little company in a desperate hand to hand fight he put several to death; it was the first encounter of the Plymouth Pilgrims with the Indians, and it deserves to be called a massacre rather than a battle. But a much pleasanter scene rose before me as from this hill I looked down upon the old church at its base; Parson Smith was for a long time the worthy pastor of this parish, and there stood the parsonage where John Adams, the second President, found his wife Abigail, the parson's daughter, one of the noblest women in our country's history; there he came to visit her on Sunday evenings, and it is said that the poor horse which he rode was allowed to stand out in the cold till the small hours of the night, because the good parson and his wife did not regard the young Boston lawyer with much favor as a suitor for Abigail's hand; however, he won in spite of Puritan prejudice against lawyers, and there at the old church was preached a sermon from a text of her own choosing after her marriage, "John came neither eating nor drinking and ye say he hath a devil."

In this plain at the foot of King Oak Hill, was the humble house of John Staple; here he had planted his family within sixteen years of the time when the Pilgrims first set foot on Plymouth Rock, and where Captain Standish grappled with the Indians in deadly

fight before they should fall upon the infant settlement and blot it out forever. Here were born to him three sons and two daughters who lived to years of adult life, viz., John, Rebecca, Abraham, Joseph and Sarah. Rebecca married Samuel Sumner, and Sarah married Increase Sumner, probably brothers, both of whom I believe came to Mendon with the early settlers. From the will of John Staple, Sen., dated March 18, 1681. and proved August 2, 1683, we learn these facts. In his will, after giving an acre of salt marsh to his son John, he says, "To my son Abraham I give twenty shillings, to be paid by my executors within three months after my decease, in money or other good pay. at money price. For as much as I was at charges to procure him a trade and have given him other estates." He then divides all his remaining property equally among the four other children; a will which shows, as it seems to me, a purpose to deal impartially with his children, making the daughters equal with the sons, (excepting that acre of salt marsh given to John who bore his own name,) and taking out all that he had done for Abraham in previous years. What strikes me particularly in it, is that the daughters are placed on an equality with the sons in his division of the estate; that two hundred years ago, this ancestor of ours believed that brothers have morally no larger rights than sisters in a father's property, and that any other than an equal division is an unworthy and wretched partiality. All honor to John Staple, who in 1681, thought his girls deserved the same treatment as his boys.

I now dismiss the sons and daughters of John, ex-

cepting Abraham, his second son, to whom and to whose descendants the remainder of my story will be devoted.

We have now our hero fairly on his feet. We have seen what is known respecting his parentage and something of the place and its surroundings where he was born and where his early life was passed. Let us inquire about that trade for which his father "was at charges," and make out as far as possible the circumstances of his early career.

He was born, as already stated, in 1638 or '39, the precise date being uncertain, and the first thing ascertained concerning him, is that he went to Dorchester probably to learn the trade of a weaver. We find him living there in 1658, then about twenty years of age, and from the records of the first parish in Dorchester we learn that he united with the church, (then under the care of Rev. Richard Mather,) by profession, on the twentieth of March in that year; and also that he was dismissed from this church two years later, 13th of January, 1660, to unite with the church in Weymouth, to which place he then returned. We know that his trade in after years was that of a weaver and as his father was at charges to procure him a trade, it seems quite probable that he went to Dorchester as an apprentice to learn it. At all events, when he returned to his native town, then in his twenty-second year, he felt so well assured of his ability to take care of himself that he soon after assumed the duty of taking care of another. We find from the Weymouth records that Abraham Staple and Mary Randall, daughter of Robert Randall, were married July 7, 1660.

This Randall family with whom our hero now became allied by marriage, was among the oldest and most respectable in the town, as we learn from the record of the division of land and the part which Robert Randall had taken in town affairs. They came from Berks county, England. The will of Robert Randall was made in 1691; in it he says: "I give to my daughter Mary, now wife of Abraham Staple of Mendon, and my daughter Hannah, now wife of John Warfield of Mendon, five pounds each in good country pay at money price, and also my greatest brass kettle to be owned between them." I quote this part of his will because it is not only interesting in itself, but it settles, past all cavil and doubt, a question which has caused more trouble in our genealogy than any other, viz.: Did Abraham Staple have a second wife Hannah of whom several children were born according to the records of Mendon? If so, then he must also have had a third wife, Mary, who survived him nine or ten years. This is the error into which Savage in his Genealogical Record has fallen, and every other man who has tried to unravel the knots in our family thread. The Mendon records show that children were born to Abraham and Hannah Staple from 1678 to 1683, and then children to Abraham and Mary Staple. But Mary Randall's father in his will of 1691, long after the last child was born, speaks of her as *now* the wife of Abraham Staple of Mendon. It proves conclusively that he never had a wife Hannah; and when we see that Abraham in his own will, made in 1698, speaks of his beloved wife Mary Staple, and when we see also, the

name Mary Staple, his wife, rudely carved on the old granite stone that marks her grave by his side, there is not a shadow of doubt but the records here are erroneous and that he never had other wife than Mary Randall. The mistake it is plain to see, grew out of the fact that Mary Staple was confounded with her sister Hannah Warfield; the town clerk for several years was under a misapprehension, and every one who has followed his record has run into utter confusion. Let this vexed question be now laid to rest.

Nothing further has been gleaned from the Weymouth records concerning the early life of our common ancestor, except a transaction not altogether creditable to him but which it is not fair that I should pass over on account of relationship. In all the towns at this time, there were large tracts of common lands, so called because they were held in common by the proprietors or settlers. From time to time these lands were divided on some basis agreed upon when the town was first settled. In Weymouth, and in all the towns I suppose, there was much trouble from trespassers on the commons; men who ignorantly or intentionally, cut wood and timber there for their own benefit. In a list of those detected and fined for this trespass in the Weymouth records, I find the names of Abraham Staple and Robert Randall, his father-in-law, both members of the church and respectably connected in the community, Abraham is convicted of having cut two cords of wood, and is fined eight shillings. This was in 1662, two years after his marriage, and as his father-in-law is named with him, may we not conclude that the young man,

who up to this time has borne an unimpeachable character, had been misled by the old man? This seems the most charitable construction to be placed upon the matter! However, it was a venial sin in the opinion of that day to cut wood on the town commons, and not derogatory I suppose to the character of church members. Had he lived in these days and been convicted of a similar offence, he would probably have been sent to the penitentiary for a term of years, unless he had cut and carried off all the wood in the town of Weymouth, in which case he would have been regarded as an uncommonly smart young man.

In this year, 1662, we find Abraham Staple associated with a number of men in Weymouth and Braintree to form a new settlement in the wilderness. They petition the Great and General Court to grant them a tract of land eight miles square for the purpose, lying to the west of Dedham and Medfield, and bounded on the south by the Province line. Their petition was granted and after purchasing the tract from the Nipmuck Indians and receiving a deed of the same, they came here either in the autumn of 1662, or the spring of 1663, to plant a new town and church. The precise date of the beginning of the settlement has never been fixed. The nearest approach to it which can now be made is the date of the birth of Abraham Staple's oldest child. This town was then included in the county of Middlesex, and the first return of births, deaths and marriages in Mendon is in the records of that county at East Cambridge, where under date of June 14, 1663, I find that "Abraham Staple, son of Abraham and

Mary Staple," was born; the first known birth of a white child within the bounds of the original Mendon. This proves that the settlers must have been here as early as the spring or summer of 1663.

Abraham, the weaver, having paid his eight shillings fine for cutting wood on the town commons, united with eleven others in the purchase of this magnificent estate of eight miles square and came to the spot where this village stands, bringing a wife, (who was to inherit five pounds and one half of her father's greatest brass kettle,) some little household furniture and the materials for carrying on his trade. He had property of one kind and another enough to entitle him to a twenty acre house lot, and a twenty acre right in all divisions of land in the territory which they had purchased, and which embraced the present towns of Mendon, Uxbridge, Milford and Blackstone, with parts of Bellingham, Upton and Northbridge. This implies, I suppose, that his property was valued altogether at fifty pounds. The largest property holders had forty acre house lots, and this implies an estate of the value of one hundred pounds. The size of lots ranged from ten acres to forty, showing that in worldly estate Abraham Staple belonged to the middle class of proprietors. We know precisely where his lot was and can point out nearly the spot where his log cabin was built and his looms began their work. The house-lot lay directly opposite the place where we are assembled, extending from a little stream on the west of the church across the main street and down the eastern slope of the hill to Muddy Brook; the northern line cuts this street in front diagonally,

running through the village near the brick office of the late William and Charles Hastings, and the southern line is indicated by the northern boundary of the farm of Richard George It is the place long known as the Stone Tavern Stand, with the addition of a portion of Silas Dudley's farm and a wedge of land on the north of the street in front of the church. The choice of location was made by drawing lots, and Abraham chose this. I know not how he could have chosen more wisely even if he had the first choice, so pleasant and desirable is the location, so strong and rich is the soil. It was a beautiful site for a home. The main road of the town divided it almost equally and it was provided with durable water for his stock. Fortunate was our father Abraham in his choice of a homestead.

How interesting and delightful it would be could we find in some old garret of Weymouth a number of letters written by Abraham and Mary to their friends giving an account of their life in the beginning of this new settlement; telling how the first rude cabins were built, how the forest was hewed down to let in the sun, and the virgin soil broken up by the mattock for their first little gardens and fields; how the ten or fifteen men came together in their Bees to make clearings among the giant trees with which the land was thickly studded; how the heavy work of subduing the forest was done almost entirely by the labor of the hand, since they had few oxen and probably not many horses among them; how they heard nightly the howl of wolves around their cabins and were visited daily by the roving Indians of the neighborhood; how they

gathered on Sunday in some central house to worship God in their simple way, one of their number reading from the Book of books, and leading them in humble, fervent prayer; how they lingered after the service was done to talk over the affairs of each family and whatever news had come from the distant homes of the bay. Especially should we delight to fall upon some word concerning the advent of the first baby in this wilderness of Mendon, that boy which came bringing light and gladness to the weaver's home on the fourteenth of June, 1663, the second Abraham! What a sensation it must have caused throughout the infant settlement; and as he became strong enough to creep about the house and find his way out of doors, what anxiety he must have caused his mother, always fearful lest so tempting a morsel might fall into the clutches of some prowling wolf, bear or Indian! But the cloud of oblivion has fallen upon the interesting scene and we can only catch a glimpse now and then of this hard, solitary life. We know that Abraham Staple's humble home was not far from the great elm by the shoe shop of Julius George.

Twelve years of steady toil and rigid economy passed swiftly away. The first little garden had grown into wide fields thickly covered with charred and blackened stumps, but producing large crops of corn and pumpkins, rye, oats, and beans, which formed the chief food of the family. Sheep, cows and swine were on the farm, bringing comfort and abundance; four boys, Abraham, Ebenezer, John and Jacob, had come into the little cabin, filling it to the door. The father threw the weaver's shuttle from early morn till

late at night, or delved among the stumps and rocks of his farm. He was respected and honored in the community; he had been made a freeman by the Great and General Court in 1673, and was often placed in positions of trust by his fellow townsmen. It was a busy, carefully governed, religious home, which Abraham and Mary had planted on that twenty acre house lot, and they were naturally looking forward to the time when their burdens would be lightened by the four boys now fast pushing their way up to manhood. But the awful blow of King Philip's war fell like a thunderbolt from a clear sky upon the growing town, and in a few months the families were driven off and the houses all burned.

Three years pass away. Peace has been restored and one by one the people creep back to their desolate and ruined homes. Among the first to return were Abraham and Mary Staple, who with their children had passed these years probably with their relatives in Weymouth. Their fifth son, Ephraim, was born here as the record shows, in 1678; Mary Staple, their first daughter, in 1680, and Benjamin, their sixth son, in 1682. These three, Ephraim, Mary and Benjamin, are credited on the records to Abraham and *Hannah*, which, as we have seen, must be an error. Mary and Benjamin died in infancy. In 1686 Hannah, their youngest child, was born, and is entered as the daughter of Abraham and *Mary*, making eight children in all, of whom six lived to attain the years of adult life.

The new house erected after the war was probably on or near the site of the one which had been burned

by the Indians; it may have been a frame house, though probably like the first, it was built of logs. The new meeting-house was a frame building, and the minister's house. Samuel Hayward the carpenter was then fairly established here, and many of the new buildings were constructed by him; but of the particulars of the re-building of the town we find almost nothing.

Abraham Staple, for still the name is so written, took an active interest in all that related to the establishment of the church and the town. He is one of the committee who signed the agreement with the first minister, Rev. Joseph Emerson; he is appointed on the committee to select a site for a new bridge across Muddy Brook and lay out the road to the grist mill; to take a draft out of the town book of all the records which interfere one with another and present it to the town; "to rectify" Rev. Mr. Rawson's chimneys that threatened to smoke out their new minister and his wife from their home. He is chosen one of the Selectmen and entrusted with many delicate and difficult negotiations; he is one of the men appointed to take a new deed of the town from the Indians; he is evidently one of the principal men in the church, and is called on the records "Goodman Staple," a title no doubt fairly earned by strict integrity and sincere piety. His reputation had evidently improved since leaving Weymouth; a result which frequently does not happen, I am sorry to say, to young men who go West to improve their fortunes. It is impossible, of course, to follow minutely the life of our ancestor through the forty-three years from his settlement here to his death, and I shall only touch a few prominent points.

All his children were born on the old homestead and it remained in the possession of his children and grandchildren down to the close of the last century, a hundred and forty years. But the spot with which his descendants have been associated much longer, and which is far more intimately connected with his name, is the farm in the south part of the town which now belongs to Linus B. Staples.* In 1685, a portion of this farm bordering on Little Pond was set off to Abraham Staple and the remainder of it to his estate after his death; and ever since it has been held by some one of his descendants, now almost two hundred years. His grandson Abraham, the third of the name, inherited the land from his father, cleared and built upon it and died there in 1767; then his great-grandson Abraham, inherited it from his father, and lived and died there; then another great-grandson, Nahor, bought it of his brother's heirs and lived and died there; then his great-great-grandson, Abraham, the son of Nahor, took it and lived and died there; and now his great-great-great-grandson, who married Sergeant Abraham's great-great-great-granddaughter, is living there. Four Abrahams have been born on that farm and six have owned it, or inherited rights in it. It has often been divided and sub-divided among heirs. Many years ago portions of it were attached to the farms of the late Jason Staples, Welcome Staples, Benoni Staples and Johnson Legg, but with few exceptions, the whole of it is still owned by the descendants of Sergeant Abraham to whom it was originally assigned, in the first division of lands nearly two hundred years ago.

* Since deceased.

How Abraham the first came by his title Sergeant, I am unable to tell. It may have been given him in King Philip's war in which he probably had some active duty. But the title is not attached to him in the town records until many years afterwards. During the latter years of his life, say from 1690 to 1703, the date of his death, it is the name by which he is usually designated, and it is inscribed upon the old stone that marks his grave. It is not so distinguished a title however in military renown that we need be very particular to seek its origin; probably it indicated his position in the train-band, or militia company of the town, formed after the war, and in which he was at first corporal, (by which name he is once designated,) and afterwards promoted to be sergeant. In the inventory of his estate I find a "musquet" and a sword and belt enumerated, showing something of the paraphernalia of real or mimic war in the Sergeant's home.

Six years before his death he seems to have removed to Taunton; a deed of certain parcels of real estate in 1698, and his will made in the same year, are dated at Taunton. His son Jacob had removed to that town soon after his marriage, and for some reason the old folks followed, it may be to get him fairly started in housekeeping. Sergeant Abraham's name disappears from the tax list here in 1697 and is restored in 1700, showing an absence of three years; but that he never intended to lose his residence here is shown from the fact that though the will was made in Taunton, he speaks of his "*now* dwelling-house" in Mendon. Let us look at his will, found in the Probate records of

Suffolk county, and bearing date 22nd of November, 1698.

To his beloved wife, Mary, is given the use of the homestead during her natural life, with exceptions in favor of certain children.

To Abraham the oldest son, a five acre right in the lands of Mendon and five shillings as "a token of paternal love and kindness," besides "other particulars before given."

To Jacob, "five shillings and lands heretofore passed to him by deed of gift."

To Ebenezer, that part of the homestead with buildings thereon which lies on the west side of the town street, after the decease of his mother, with ten acres of land at the Great River "called Isaac's Lot," and a right in the undivided town lands.

To Ephraim, a five acre right in the town lands and all the lands on the other side of Muddy Brook, reaching "to the uttermost bound of my lands on the Neck," and fifteen acres on Mill river.

"Unto my daughter Hannah, (she was then twelve years old,) I give after my wife's decease, all the moveable estate left in her hands, nothing doubting but that my dear wife will in her life-time take a due motherly care of her, and spare to her such things, if she should live to see her disposed of, as she can part with comfortably." She did live to see Hannah disposed of, in 1708, to John Darling of Mendon, who followed the same occupation as her father; and who can doubt that Mary not only took a due motherly care of her, but gave her for a "setting out," every article of the

moveable estate which she could comfortably spare, and a great deal more. Goodman Staples did not understand a mother's heart if he thought there was any danger upon this point. But he seems to have been conscious afterwards that he needed such counsel quite as much as his wife, for he had dealt by Hannah not as his father had done by *his* daughters, but rather shabbily in leaving her nothing but the worn out furniture of his "now dwelling-house." This is evident from a memorandum on the inventory of his estate which reads as follows: "There is a cow, a steer, weaver's looms, and a linnen wheel and two sheep which were given by the deceased in his life to his daughter Hannah." The very things it may be, which "disposed of" Hannah to the weaver John Darling, who found in her not only a wife according to his liking, but all the materials for carrying on the trade which Sergeant Abraham had laid down.

Finally the will names his sons Ebenezer and Ephraim as his executors.

But there is one son whom I have not yet named, and I shall quote the article of the will relating to him in full, because it is not only curious but shows a thoughtful tenderness in our father Abraham towards a poor, unfortunate child, really noble and beautiful.

He says: "To my son John Staple, I give twenty and one acres of land which shall retain the rights of a three acre House lott in all present and future divisions of land, meadow and swamp in Mendon. Ten acres of it being bounded westerly with the road leading towards the Meeting House, and so down toward Muddy

Brook the whole breadth of the lot until ten acres be fully completed." It is the land where the Town Hall now stands, belonging to Mr. Dudley, and the very best of the Staples farm. He then gives a tract of meadow to him known as Staples' West Meadow, and then adds: "This land so bequeathed, together with my son John to whom God hath denied the use of such reason whereby he might be capable to improve his estate for his advantage, to be under the care and management of my executors, or any one of them whom he may choose to dwell with, at the direction and by the advice of Captain Josiah Chapin and his son Seth Chapin, whom I hereby impower to take the oversight of him, and if my executors should not do well by him, to take from them and to dispose of what I have left to him for his best support. Otherwise the land to be shared equally between my executors or be enjoyed wholly by the one with whom he shall choose to dwell."

I think we have here an insight into Sergeant Abraham's character. We see his good common sense, his deep concern for the welfare of one who could not take care of himself, and his determination that the poor boy's rights should be guarded in the strongest way against the possible injustice or unkindness of his own brothers. They shall always know, he seems to say, that I am watching them through the eyes of Captain Josiah Chapin and his son Seth, and that my hand will be laid on them the moment they ill-treat him or squander his property. And it is a beautiful testimonial also to his perfect confidence in the integrity of the Chapins. Before signing and sealing the will he adds that he ap-

points these men to be overseers to his whole will, that they may see it faithfully performed in every particular. These sons of mine, he seems to say, though they are apparently honest men, may try to wrong their mother and sister, also, and there is no harm in watching even honest men. Thus the will contains the strongest evidence of the justice, the tenderness, the impartiality and the good sense of Sergeant Abraham. The Mendon record says that he died on the 20th of October, 1703. The appraisal of his property was made on the 21st of November, 1703; his will was proved on the 21st of December, 1703, and the inventory of his estate sworn to before the Judge of Probate for the county of Suffolk on the same day, which would seem to be conclusive as to the date of his death. And yet, the old stone that marks his grave bears this inscription, "Serg't Abra'm Staple, dyed Oct. 20th, 1704, aged 65 years," which is evidently an error of just a year, and accordingly has been corrected on the new monument which reads, "Oct. 20th, 1703." But this is not the first time that a grave-stone has recorded what was untrue.

His estate is valued in the inventory at £120, which does not include what he had already given his sons, nor those rights in future divisions of the common land which he bequeaths them in his will. One of those five acre rights I find was sold a few years later, viz., that given to Ephraim, for £200, which indicates that their aggregate value was £800, and on this basis the full value of the property left to his family must have exceeded £1,000, a handsome estate for that time.

His wife Mary survived him nearly nine years, dying, as the record says, March 9th, 1712, but as the stone says, March 2d, 1713, another discrepancy of a year and seven days. Here, also, we have followed the town record and not the stone, though we have no means of proving *that* to be certainly in error, as in the case of her husband. But having found the town clerk right in the first and the stone wrong, we have thought it safe to assume that the town clerk was right in the second also.

The bodies of Abraham and Mary Staples were laid side by side in the old Burying Ground used from the beginning of the settlement, more than two hundred years ago. Their graves were made, no doubt, among those who with them here braved the terrors and hardships of a wilderness life. But these are the only graves of the original settlers which were marked by stones bearing an inscription, and hence they are the only ones now certainly known. The stones are rough, uncut granite, taken from the fields, rudely chiselled and placed there probably many years after their death. The mound where their dust has now reposed for nearly a century and three-quarters, long since sunk down below the level of the ground, and the rude stones stood leaning over the hollow that was made; a little handful of earth is all that remains of those strong and vigorous forms that here beat back the wild beast and the wilder savage, to subdue the wilderness and make a pleasant home for their children.

Two of their descendants have placed a simple granite monument beside their graves, planted deep in the

earth and rising but a few feet above it. It is a single, solid block, standing upon a pedestal which scarcely rises out of the ground, cut into pyramidal form, massive, firm, looking as though it could not be moved save by some great convulsion of the earth itself. It fittingly symbolizes their characters in its simplicity, its stability, and its imperishable nature.

They belonged to the age of homespun, far removed in its characteristics from the age of shoddy; an age of rough manners, of hard work and hard fare, plain talk, and humble aims; an age when people made no great pretensions and were satisfied to appear to be simply what they were; an age when the virtues of hospitality, neighborly kindness, honest dealing and honest speaking generally prevailed. Life then was a very simple affair. People moved slowly; nobody was in a fret and fury to get rich in a day, perilling health, happiness and character in the fierce struggle. They plodded quietly along in the same old paths as their fathers; they feared God and stood up bravely for what they believed was right; they were social, sincere, kindly and religious. We have gained immensely in culture, comfort, luxury, all the materials of happiness. But whether we have gained as much in the substantial elements of character, in contentment of mind, in purity of morals, or in genuine piety; whether with our multipled materials for enjoyment we are really a happier people than our fathers of the homespun age, admits of very serious question.

We have placed this monument by the graves of Abraham and Mary Staples because the virtues of the

humble life and the good heart deserve to be remembered and honored. They had little education; I doubt if either of them could write; certainly Abraham generally if not always, made his mark, and I think Mary also. But they had the education of hard circumstances and the discipline of heavy trials; and out of them they wrought something of good and noble character. Their descendants in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh generations have gathered here to-day where they lived and died to honor their memory. We have no reason to be proud of our ancestry; neither have we any reason to be ashamed of it. God grant that we may fill our places as worthily as Abraham and Mary filled theirs!

Will it be asking too much of your patience to listen a few minutes longer while I briefly sketch the fortunes of Sergeant Abraham's children, and trace out something of our mutual relationship? I will make the trial.

I shall begin with the youngest. Hannah the only daughter, as we have seen, married the weaver John Darling in 1708, and they became the progenitors of many Darlings who have lived in this vicinity.

The two Johns, whom some of us remember here, were probably their lineal descendants.

Ephraim the youngest son married in Taunton, a woman by the name of Webster or Welster; it is impossible to tell what the spelling is in the record. They had one child a feeble-minded youth, who was placed under the guardianship of his uncles, Ebenezer Staples and John Darling, his father having died soon after his birth. He probably never married, though feeble-minded and foolish folks sometimes do.

Ebenezer who inherited the homestead, lived to the ripe age of over eighty years, marrying three times. His first wife was Huldah Aldrich of this town, by whom he had no children; she seems to have brought him quite a large property. His second wife was Mehitable Barron of Concord, to whom he was married in 1727. From this union were born Benjamin, Mary, Ebenezer and Elias, all attaining adult life.

Ebenezer the father, was a blacksmith, the first in the family of a long line who here followed that occupation. He was a man of eminence in the town, and evidently possessed a handsome fortune. He married for a third wife in 1745, Mary Davis of Bedford, but of this union there were no children. Let me here say a word of Ebenezer's children. Benjamin inherited the old homestead and followed at first, the trade of his father. He is called Lt. Benjamin Staples on the town records, and Deacon Benjamin on the church records. He married Jane Thayer of this town in 1749, of whom were born Thomas, Mehitable, Mary, Simeon,—the old blacksmith whom some of you will remember at his shop on the spot where the store of Henry A. and William Aldrich now stands,—Susanna and Benjamin. Benjamin the father, probably erected the tavern on the old homestead and left the anvil for the public house, a disastrous speculation which covered it with a mortgage and ultimately lost the old place to the family. Simeon his son married Sally Neal in 1779, and had a large family, many of whom lived and died in this town. Mary the daughter of Ebenezer married in 1754, Dr. William Jennison of Mendon, afterwards a member of

the Continental Congress and an active man in the political affairs of the Revolution. Some of their descendants are now living in Worcester.

Ebenezer, Jr. married Abigail Curtis of Worcester and moved to Sudbury where he followed the occupation of a carpenter. He was the grandfather of the late William R. Staples of Providence, Chief Justice of Rhode Island, whose four sons now reside in that city, and whose daughter with her husband, Rev. Edward L. Drowne of Newburyport, are with us to-day. Elias the youngest son of Ebenezer, Sen., born in 1738, married in Brookfield and there followed the trade of a blacksmith, rearing a large family. Three grandsons of Elias—Isaac, James and George, located in Boston and became successful merchants there. He is represented here by his great-grandson, Samuel E. Staples of Worcester. Thus the descendants of Ebenezer have made, and still make a large and honorable showing in the trades and professions of life.

Jacob Staples second son of Sergeant Abraham, married in 1690 Abigail Winter of this town, of whom he had two children, Abigail and Hannah born here; the first of whom died in infancy. Jacob removed to Taunton in 1697 and his descendants, I suppose, are among the many Staples families of that city and its vicinity.

John Staples we have already seen disposed of under the guardianship of his brothers, Ebenezer and Ephraim, who so far as we know were faithful to their trust.

There remains one other child of Sergeant Abraham, viz., his oldest son, Abraham 2nd, born in 1663. He married Mehitable Hayward of this town, daughter of

Samuel the carpenter, by whom he left at the time of his death in 1706, three children, Mehitable, Mary and Abraham, the latter then an infant ten months old. Abraham the 2nd was a farmer and located in Uxbridge at the corners now called "the city," His farm lay to the south of the old Hartford turnpike, towards the Wheelock factory. He died at the early age of forty-three, leaving the two daughters already mentioned, and the infant son on whose fortunes our fortunes were largely dependant. But he survived all the foes of infancy and childhood and became a vigorous and stalwart man. He planted himself on the land which he inherited near the Little Pond, cleared it and built the old gambrel-roofed house there in 1752, so well remembered by many, and where several generations of his descendants were born. He married in 1727, Abigail Taft daughter of Daniel Taft, Esq., of this town, of whom were born Deborah, Abigail, Mary, Abraham 4th, and Lydia. His wife died probably in 1736; of their children, Abigail married Benoni Benson, in 1752. She was familiarly known in after years as "Landlady Benson," a most worthy and excellent woman. Abraham 4th, the only son of Abraham Staples and Abigail Taft, was the father of George Staples, and grandfather of Abijah, Joseph, Benoni, Welcome and Calista.

Abraham 3d married for a second wife, Thankful Thompson, daughter of Woodland Thompson, the first proprietor and settler of Wigwam Hill. Of her was born one child, Thankful, who became the wife of Asa Fletcher of Mendon in 1762, and mother of the late Hezekiah, William and Nahor Fletcher and of Margery

and Amuty Fletcher. Thankful his wife, died after two years, and Abraham 3d married for a third wife in 1740, Lydia White of Uxbridge, of whom were born seven children, viz.: Deborah who married Joseph Marsh in 1759; Isaac who married —— Benson; Ruth who died young; Ruth who married Amos Craggin; Chloe who died unmarried; Haymutal, and Nahor Staples, my grandfather. Abraham 3d died in 1767, leaving a large landed estate; a man evidently strongly rooted in the earth, sagacious in all practical affairs and enjoying the confidence of his fellow townsmen. His only surviving grandchild, Deborah Staples, widow of Benoni Staples, is with us to-day, in the eighty-fourth year of her age. She stands nearest to Sergeant Abraham of any person now living, being the fourth generation from him; Chloe Legg another granddaughter, died two years since in the eighty-seventh year of her age.

The third wife of Abraham survived him thirty-one years, living to the advanced age of ninety-eight, the oldest person whose death is recorded upon the Mendon records.

The fourth Abraham, son of Abraham 3d and Abigail Taft, inherited the old homestead and married Mary Harvey of Taunton in 1753, of whom were born Jonathan, George, Abigail, Lydia, Abraham, Jacob and Mary; and of a second wife Ruth Wheelock whom he married in 1774, Ruth, Lendol and Susanna — six sons and four daughters — all of whom lived to adult years.

He died in 1792. Probably he was the best educated, and in some respects the ablest man of the Abrahamic line. He is designated in the public records of the

county as Abraham Staples, Gent., which I suppose means that he was what is called fore-handed, a man of leisure and of prominence in the town. He was connected with the church in the South Parish or Chestnut Hill.

If it takes four generations as the English proverb declares, to make a gentleman, the proverb seems to have been fulfilled in the Staples family in the fourth Abraham, the great-grandfather of our chairman, H. B. Staples, Esq. of Worcester.

I shall touch on one more only, the half-brother of Abraham 4th, Nahor Staples, born in 1756, the youngest child in a family of thirteen. He married Prudence Darling in 1775, of whom were born Lucinda, who married Seth Southwick; Lydia, who married Johnson Legg; Ruth, who married Leudol Staples; Esra, who married Cynthia White; Nathan, who died young; Chloe, who married Alpheus Freeman for her first husband and Johnson Legg for the second; Rachel, who died young; Deborah, who married Benoni Staples; Abraham, who married Martha Kingsbury; Jason, who married Phila Taft—making twelve children. Nahor Staples died in 1820, and Prudence his wife, in 1827.

To go farther with the genealogy would be quite impossible to-day, so widely do the ramifications of the next generation extend. The two great branches of our family tree, are those of Abraham and Ebenezer, sons of Sergeant Abraham. If these could be fully traced out, I have no doubt they would show as their fruit several hundred persons. But I have done enough

to give you a slight idea of the task it would be to bring our genealogical record down to the present day.

We gather here on the one hundred and seventy-fourth anniversary of the death of Sergeant Abraham. Like the Abraham of old, he was truly the father of a great multitude. May they so live as to honor their ancestry! A monument of granite will grow old and crumble away at last. But a monument of honest work, good influence and noble character is as imperishable as the throne of God. Each can build for himself such a memorial, and departing, feel no fear that it will ever perish and be forgotten.