



OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SKETCHES

No. 29

Being the proceedings of the Twenty-eighth Meeting of the
Old Dartmouth Historical Society, held in their building,
Water Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts, on June 30, 1910.

THE SLOCUM HOUSE AT BARNEY'S JOY

By Henry Howland Crapo

[NOTE.—The “Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches” will be published by the Society quarterly and may be purchased for ten cents each on application to the Secretary and also at Hutchinson’s Book Store.]



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WATER STREET, NEW BEDFORD
MASSACHUSETTS
JUNE 30, 1910

The Old Dartmouth Historical Society met in their building Thursday evening and the members listened to one of the most interesting papers of the year, read by Henry H. Crapo, and having as its title "The Slocum House at Barney's Joy."

President Edmund Wood, in referring to the outdoor meetings formerly held by the society, said: "These field meetings were interesting, in so far as they were held on the site of some building with historical associations, or with some of the branches of the original settlement of Old Dartmouth. Since we have come into possession of this building, the society has grown proud, and we have been perfectly satisfied to meet among our own household gods. There is a question as to whether this is entirely wise, and the president would suggest that it might be well to have a

regular meeting outside of our own building. An added enthusiasm is gained by any body meeting with the incentive which surrounds being present on the scene of interesting events, and the opportunity of getting acquainted which accompanies the breaking of bread with each other, even if it is from a picnic basket.

Within a short time, two delegations from other historical societies have visited us. Being as yet a youthful organization, we have not exhausted the places within our own territory, while the older societies have exhausted the treasures near at home.

The members of the Lynn Historical Society who recently visited this city were much impressed with the fact that the Old Dartmouth Historical Society had accomplished so much within so short an existence."

The Slocum House at Barney's Joy

BY

HENRY HOWLAND CRAPO

Whence came "Old Gyles Slocum," an early settler of Portsmouth on the Island of "Acquidneck" I know not. Somebody has hazarded the guess that he "came over" from Somersetshire in 1638. The tradition that he was a son of Anthony Slocum of Taunton I am well satisfied is incorrect. Anthony Slocum, like Ralph Russell, are unverified myths in connection with old Dartmouth. There is no evidence that either of them ever settled in Dartmouth, even for a short period, or that they had aught to do with the establishment of the iron forge at Russells Mills. On the other hand we have definite information about both of these men and their connections with the iron industry of Taunton in 1652 and subsequently. I rather regret that the thrill which, as a child, I often experienced in crossing the stone arched bridge near the old Apponagansett meeting house was unjustified. I had been told that tradition had it that Anthony Slocum, an ancestor of mine, was there tomahawked by the Indians as he was crossing the bridge. Not only am I now convinced that he was no ancestor of mine, and that it is extremely improbable that the old bridge, or any bridge, existed at the time when Anthony Slocum could have been in Dartmouth, but a still more convincing, not to say conclusive, consideration is that this same Anthony Slocum was lording it as a Count Palatine in Albemarle County, North Carolina, some thirty years after his supposed residence in Dartmouth.

In 1670 Anthony Slocum petitioned the court presided over by the Honorable Peter Carteret, Esquire, governor and commander in chief of Carolina for the return of his hat which he had lost, perhaps, on the voyage from New England to his new home. It was ordered by the court that "he have his hatt delivered by ye fisherman at Roanok, he paying the fee." In 1679 Anthony Slocum appears as an "Esquire," a member of the Palatine Court for the County of Albemarle, and he remained a mem-

ber of this court until at least as late as 1684. In 1680 "Anthony Slocumb, Esqr. one of the Lds Proprs Deputies aged ninety years or thereabouts," made a deposition in regard to some "rotten tobacco."

His will dated in 1688, and probated in 1689, making him almost a centenarian, establishes the fact, apparently beyond question, that he was the same Anthony Slocum who was surveyor of highways in Taunton as late as 1662, since it provides for certain grandchildren by the name of Gilbert concerning whom Anthony had previously written a letter, still preserved, to his "brother-in-law" William Harvey of Taunton. His will is a lengthy document reciting his family relations and devising his property to his children by name, and it is certainly strange indeed that if he had a son Giles in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, he should not even have mentioned him. Moreover, the dates relating to Anthony Slocum and Giles Slocum would not indicate that they were father and son. If they were of kin they were more probably brothers.

Giles Slocum, of Portsmouth, at all events, is the unquestioned progenitor of the Slocums of old Dartmouth. His name appears many times in the records of Portsmouth, where he was certainly living in 1648, and probably earlier, and died in 1682. He and his wife Joan had nine children from two of whom, Peleg the sixth child, and Eliezer the ninth, I descend. Old Giles and his wife were early members of the Society of Friends, and Giles evinced that association of piety and good business sense, common among Friends. He became an extensive land owner in Rhode Island and New Jersey, and purchased three-quarters of an original share in the Dartmouth purchase. By his will, in which he describes himself as "Gyles Slocum now of the Towne of Portsmouth in Road Island and ye King's Providence Plantation of New England in America, sinnair," he devises to his son Peleg one-half of a share and to his son Eliezer one-quarter of a share of "the land lying in Dart-

mouth," and after making provision for his wife and children and grandchildren gives "unto my loving friends the people of God called Quakers four pounds lawful moneys of New England."

Peleg Slocum had probably been in Dartmouth before his father's death. He took up his father's interest and "sat down" on the neck of land at the confluence of Paskamansett River with Buzzards Bay which has since been known as Slocums Neck. His mansion house stood near the home of Paul Barker and after its demolition was long known as "the old chimney place." Of Peleg Slocum, that "honest publick Friend," and his wife Mary Holder, our secretary has given a most interesting sketch in the third publication of this Society.

Eliezer was ten years younger than his brother Peleg, and the baby of the family. He was born in 1664. As a boy he grew up in his father's home in Portsmouth. The older brothers and sisters had married and left the homestead. Then came to the household a maiden ycleped Elephel Fitzgerald, the daughter, so the story goes, of The Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare. It is a pretty story so we may as well believe it. This story explains the presence of this blossom from so stately a tree in the rough home of a Quaker pioneer of Rhode Island in the following fashion.

Once upon a time, which, since nobody can dispute us, we might as well say was the year 1670, an English army officer fell in love with a fair Geraldine. The Geraldines as a race had no love for the English, remembering how Lord Thomas, the son of the great earl, known as "Silken Thomas," with his five uncles on February 3rd, 1536, were hung at Tyburn as traitors of the deepest dye because of their fierce resentment of the English domination of Erin. Queen Elizabeth, to be sure, afterwards, repealed the attainder and restored the title and family estates, but the Fitzgeralds, descendants of kings (like most Irishmen), never forgave. And so the earl for the time being, acting the part of "heavy father," forbade the marriage. He probably stamped around the stage thumping his cane. They always do. Whereupon, quite in accord with the conventions of such tales, the young people eloped. They crossed the Atlantic to America, bringing with them a young sister of the bride, our Lady Elephel.

Perhaps the earl, in the manner of Lord Ullin, stood on the shore of the Emerald Isle, and "sore dismayed, through storm and shade his child he

did discover" as she embarked to cross the raging ocean.

"Come back! Come back!" he may have cried

Across the stormy water,
'And I'll forgo my Irish pride,
My daughter! Oh! my daughter!"

The Ullin girl only tried to cross a ferry with her Highland chief, if you remember, yet of the noble father's piercing cries, Tom Campbell says:

"'Twas vain. The loud waves lashed the shore,

Return or aid preventing,
The waters wild went o'er his child
And he was left lamenting."

Fortunately my grandmother, Elephel and her sister set forth in more favorable weather, and although she may, perhaps, have left her noble sire lamenting, the waters of the Atlantic did not go "o'er her," and she made a safe landing on this side.

In what manner our little Irish lady was separated from her sister, and came to find a home in the simple household of Giles Slocum in Portsmouth the tradition sayeth not. "Irish maids" were not commonly employed in those early days, and even in later times "Irish maids" were seldom earls' daughters. None the less it is probable that the Lady Elephel did in fact serve in a "domestic capacity" in the household of the old people whose daughters had all married and left the home.

That the youthful Eliezer should fall in love with the stranger maiden was, of course, a foregone conclusion. That the Quaker parents should be scandalized at the thought of an alliance so unequivocally "out of meeting," the little lady, doubtless being a Romanist, was equally to be foreseen. The young people were sternly chided and forbidden to foregather. There are stories of this Portsmouth courtship which have found their way down through more than two centuries that hint of the incarceration of the maiden in the smoke house,—not at the time, let us hope, in operation for the curing of hams or herrings,—and of the daring Quaker Romeo scaling the roof by night and prating down the chimney of love and plans to hoodwink the old folks.

Possibly he did not say,

"She speaks!

Ah! speak again, bright angel! for thou art

As glorious as this night, being o'er my head,

As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white upturned wondering eyes

Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,

When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds,

And sails upon the bosom of the air!"

Probably he did not use those precise words, yet doubtless he felt them in much the same way as did the inspired Montague. Indeed such glowing panegyrics of the free vault of the heavens might have proved a bit irritating to the fair one imprisoned in her sepulchral and ashy dungeon. And yet if she did not say, "Eliezer, Oh! Wherefore art thou, Eliezer Slocum, the Quaker!" her sentiments were unquestionably identical with those of the fair Capulet. Eliezer appears to have inherited a more practical turn of mind than the lovesick Montague,—since he crawled down the chimney and rescued the maiden. Just how he managed it is not explained. The door was manifestly locked. Perhaps he boosted her up the chimney. At all events these Portsmouth lovers succeeded in arranging matters far more satisfactorily than did their prototypes of Verona. And so they were married before they were twenty and came to Dartmouth and lived happily ever afterwards.

The quarter share which Eliezer derived from old Giles he took up near his brother Peleg, farther down the Neck at a place called "Barne's Joy." He and Elephel were living there, it would seem, prior to 1684. In 1694 Eliezer and his brother Peleg are named as Proprietors of Dartmouth in the confirmatory deed of Governor Bradford. Eliezer's share would have amounted to something like four hundred acres. The title to his homestead farm, however, was not confirmed to him until November 11th, 1710, by the "committee appoynted by her Majestie's Justices of ye Quarter Sessions," William Manchester, Samuel Hammond and Benjamin Crane. The farm in the layout is described as the farm on which "the said Eliezer is now living." It contained two hundred and sixty-nine acres. It is described as being "on ye west side of Paskamasset river on ye eastward side of Barnsess Joy." It seems that in addition to the rights Eliezer derived from his father he was entitled by purchase to sixty acres in the right of Edward Doty and nine acres in the right of William Bradford, old Plymouth worthies.

In what year he built the mansion house I know not. It seems probable that it was built about 1700. Subsequently not long before Eliezer's death in 1727 he built "a new addition," an ell to the west of the main structure. By what means Eliezer acquired so ample a store of worldly goods is not readily comprehended. It is evident, however, that among the very simple Friends of his acquaintance he was considered re-

markably "well to do." His house was a "mansion." He doubtless had a few silver spoons, possibly a silver tankard, and he had cash. When he died in 1727 his estate was appraised at £5790, 18s, 11d, of which £665 was personal, and this is said to have been exclusive of the gifts he made to his children before his death. This is a large sum for those days. It may be that this appraisal was in "old tenor," a somewhat inflated currency in Massachusetts prior to 1737, yet, even so, it still indicates a marvellous accumulation of wealth for a "yeoman." I regret to say that one of the learned historians of this Society is inclined to believe that my honored ancestor, Peleg Slocum, that conspicuously "honest publick Friend," was not only a farmer, but a merchant "on the wrong side of the law," in fact a smuggler, and that his famous "shalop" was not always used for errands of "religious concernment," but in a very profitable contraband trade. His inventory certainly indicates that he was somewhat mysteriously a "trader." His brother Eliezer very likely may have joined in these mercantile enterprises. Indeed there has always clung about the old farm at Barney's Joy a flavor of slaves and smuggling.

The Lady Elephel, whose hard labor and frugality had doubtless contributed to this store of wealth, comparing herself with her neighbors, may have been justified in feeling that she was "well set up." Yet there was one crisis in her life when her plain home and country fare must have seemed humble indeed in her eyes. It was all a wonderful romance, the coming of that sister who took her from her father's castle and leaving her with Giles Slocum went away to New Amsterdam with her English husband, prospered and became a lady of high fashion and degree. So remarkable in the annals of Slocums Neck is the entry of this great lady in her coach and four, with postillions maybe, that unto this day the tale is told by the great-great-grandchildren of the "Neckers." The progress of the coach through the sandy roads was probably sufficiently slow and majestic to permit of all the neighbors getting a glimpse of the great personage in her silks and flounces, with bepowdered hair, and, I fondly trust, patches upon her fair cheeks, and jewels in her ears. When the ponderous coach bumped down the narrow lane and drew up before the door of the Barney's Joy house, the excitement of its inmates must have been intense. As the Lady Elephel, in her severely demure garb, welcomed her gorgeous sister to her simple home, and they "fell

into each other's arms" (at least I hope they did), I wonder did their thoughts hie back to Kildare and their fathers' castle in the green isle of their birth? The little granddaughter, Ann Slocum, who afterwards married Job Almy and was the grandmother of my great grandmother, Anne Almy Chase Slocum, may have stood entranced by the doorstep as the gloriously bedecked creature entered and was escorted to the "great low room."

Eliezer Slocum died on the "11th day of the first month, called March, in the 13th year of his majestie's King George his reign 1726-7." By his will he gave to his beloved wife Elephel 20 pounds per annum, and all his household goods and furniture, and "one mare which she commonly rides together with her furniture," and two cows "which shall be kept at the proper cost and charge of my executors"; also an Indian girl named Dorcas, and various other items, and then provides as follows, viz.:

"Item. I give and bequeath to Elephel, my beloved wife, the great low room in my dwelling house, with the two bedrooms belonging, together with the chamber over it and the bedrooms belonging thereto, and the garet, and also what part of the new addition she shall choose and one half of the cellar during her natural life." The floor plan of the old house which our secretary has in his possession enables one to understand this very liberal provision for the widow.

His farm he divides into three parts, giving the northerly part of about 100 acres to his son Eliezer, "where his dwelling house stands." This tract in more modern times has been known as the "Henry Allen farm." It was there doubtless that little Ann was born, and there married Job Almy. To his son Ebenezer he gave "that southerly part of my homestead farm on which my dwelling house now stands." This of course refers to the old house. The "middle part" between the northerly and southerly parts, together with stock and money and gear he gave to both sons to be equally divided. Naturally Ebenezer took the southerly portion of this middle part.

There is a rather quaintly phrased section of this will of Eliezer Slocum which I cannot refrain from quoting. After giving to Benjamin Slocum, a grandson, £100 and a salt marsh and a fresh meadow, the will proceeds, "And whereas, Maribah Slocum, the widow of my son Benjamin, being with child, if the same prove a male child, I then give and bequeath to the same male child (as yet not born) a tract of land lying near John Ker-

by's with a dwelling house and orchard thereon, and also a tract of land lying in Aarons Countrey, so called, and also one tract of land lying on the side and joining Coaksett river, and also two acres of meadow lying near Guinney Island, and also two acres of cedar swamp in Quanpoge Swamp, he the said male child paying unto his brother Benjamin £250. But if the child which is not yet born should prove a female child all the inheritance I have here given to it, being a male child, shall be given to Benjamin Slocum, the said Benjamin paying his sister £50 when she becomes 18 years of age." He also gives £200 for the "bringing up" of these two grandchildren.

You may be interested to know that "it" proved to be a male child. His name was John. He married Martha Tillinghast and became a highly respected and prosperous citizen of Newport, Rhode Island, leaving many descendants.

The widow Elephel lived with her son Ebenezer in the homestead for twenty-one years after her husband's death, dying in 1748 and disposing by her will of beds and silver spoons, brass kettles and hand-irons, not forgetting that male grandchild John and his brother Benjamin, and giving the residue of her estate, which was considerable for a widow, to her eldest daughter Meribah Ricketson, wife of William. A year or two later Ebenezer desiring to remove back to Portsmouth, perhaps to be nearer the "meetings," his wife Bathsheba (Hull) joining, conveyed his farm at Barney's Joy of 220 acres to his cousin Peleg Slocum, the father of Williams Slocum, my great grandfather. The date of the deed is March 20th, 1750. The consideration is two thousand pounds. This seems an amazing price to pay for a farm on Slocum's Neck. It is also to be wondered how Peleg Slocum who was but twenty-three years of age was able to put up the price. To be sure he was one of three sons of his father Peleg, who was one of four sons of his father Peleg, that "honest publick friend," whose estate in acres had been considerable, and whose profits from his mysterious "trading" had been large, and yet, even so, two thousand pounds was a "terrible sight of money" in those days.

No doubt the farm at Barney's Joy was an immensely profitable one. The ground had been cleared and cultivated for nearly three-quarters of a century. The fish at the mouth of the Paskamansett were plentiful. They were caught in great quantities, landed at Deep Water Point, and placed thickly on the soil. It was a case of what is now called "intensified fer-

tilization." The crops were doubtless many times as abundant as the cleverest Portuguese of today could raise. Then, too, the Island of Cuttyhunk, at one time known as Slocum's Island, afforded good grazing for the cattle in summer. The cattle were taken over in boats each spring, and in the autumn brought home and the increase sold. Yet admitting the advantages of this farm of two hundred acres, much of which, after all, was ledge, salt marsh, and sand, it is difficult to understand how Peleg Slocum had the courage to pay two thousand pounds for it in the year 1750. Its present value is predicated solely upon its exceptional scenic beauty. It has been a favorite place of sojourn of Robert Swain Gifford, the artist, who has produced its autumn glories on many a canvas. It is not to be supposed, however, that Peleg Slocum purchased the farm for esthetic reasons. He demonstrated, at all events, that he knew what he was about, since he prospered abundantly and lived for many years on the old place keeping up its traditions of opulence.

It was in the old mansion house on this farm that the first president of this society, William Wallace Crapo, was born, in 1830. He remembers the old house well and his grandfather's family who dwelt there. It was substantially the same without doubt at the time when he recalls it as it was when the marvelous coach drew up before it and the two noble Fitzgeralds were reunited. It was a picturesque and pleasing structure well set. A sheltered meadow sloped downward from its southern front to the salt pond and the winding inlets of the river. From the windows one looked out over the meadow, where beneath a huge willow tree was the family coach, to the white sands of Deep Water Point and the long stretch of Allen's Beach, and, beyond, to the waters of Buzzards Bay as they merge with the ocean. The main portion of the house was of two stories with an ample garret above, the gables facing east and west. The front door, plain in design yet with a certain dignity, was at what was the west end of the southern front of the original structure, but after the "new addition" in 1720 it was about a third of the way along the main facade with two windows to the west

and three to the east. The entrance hall was small with a narrow winding stairway leading to the big chamber above, and the "bedrooms belonging thereto," the large stack chimney, behind, taking up far more room than the hall. To the right as one entered was "the great low room" from which led two chambers. To the left was a good-sized room which in later days was called the "parlor."

Behind the "great low room" was a still larger room, the kitchen and living room, the most interesting of the apartments. The logs in the long fireplace were always burning, since here all the family cooking was done on the coals and by pots hung to the cranes, and in the brick oven by the side. Above the fireplace was a panel some six feet by four, hewn from a single board, which today is almost the only relic of the structure which has been preserved. On this panel hung the musket and the powder horns ready to be seized at alarm. On the west side of the room was a huge meal chest. In the northwest corner stood a black oak high clock with Chinese lacquer panels which now stands in Mr. Crapo's house in New Bedford. This clock was buried in the barn meadow with the silver and valuables packed in its ample case, when the British man-of-war Nimrod was cruising along the shore in the War of 1812. In the northeast corner was an ample pantry closet which must have held many dainties during its long service. Off from the living room was another good-sized bedroom. Behind was the covered stoop with the cheese press. Behind this there were several low shed-like additions which gave a feeling of considerable size to the whole structure.

After the death of Williams Slocum, my great grandfather, the place fell into the possession of a descendant who was far from carrying on the traditions of prosperity of the family, and the place quickly fell into decay. It was almost a ruin in 1887 when I visited it and made the little etching which our secretary has. In 1900 the house was torn down and now only the cellar remains to mark the spot where Eliezer Slocum, the Quaker, and the Lady Elephel lived their lives of love and happiness two centuries ago.



ILLUSTRATIONS.

The rear view of the house is reproduced from a sketch on copper made by Henry H. Crapo in 1887 directly from the structure. The front view is reproduced from a drawing made by Mr. Crapo from data afforded by a water-color sketch of William A. Wall, painted 1865-1870, and from photographs taken shortly before the demolition of the house.

“This old New England-born romance.”

Holmes.

