

OLD HOMESTEADS

OF

GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

BY

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GROTON :

1883.

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By a careful examination of the Indian Roll which has recently been published under the direction of Dr. Samuel A. Green, and also from a study of the first volume of the Proprietors' Records, together with my personal knowledge of the town, I have found what I believe to be the home estates of quite a large number of the men living in town within the first twenty-five years after its settlement, most of whom were original proprietors. The part of the Indian Roll from which I derived the most information is that relating to the laying out of the highways. This portion of the record is quite clear.

The home estates of a few men living in town during the first half of the last century I have learned, for the most part, through Miss Elizabeth Farnsworth. She obtained the information from her grandmother Farnsworth, who was born at Groton in 1716, and lived in town most of her life.

My purpose in giving the names by which many of the places were known in my boyhood, as well as the names of the present owners and occupants, is to give a clear idea to all, of the places designated.

Timothy Allen was the sexton of the church during nearly, if not throughout, the entire period of the existence of the first meeting-house, which stood probably upon the high land between my father's barns and the road now called Hollis street. Mr. Allen's house was probably situated several rods back from the road leading from the present Hollis street to Martin's Pond, on the south side of the road

and about opposite to the house now occupied by Thomas Branham.

Ellis Barron seems to have lived on the present Boston road, then known as the "Bay Highway." His house was situated a little below what was known in my boyhood as the Blodgett place, but on the west side of the road, about one half mile north of Ridge Hill Tavern. His house lot bordered both on the Boston road, and on the road that turns off to the south and runs towards the Fletcher stone quarry.

James Blood lived probably a few rods off of the road which leads from the four corners at "Nod" in the river valley to Reedy Meadow. Mr. George D. Brigham has told me that in the woods a little to the north of the road he once found an old cellar, and I am inclined to believe that on that spot stood Mr. Blood's house. The record conveys the impression that in early times the line of this road, for at least a part of the way, was somewhat farther north than it is now; so it is probable that Mr. Blood's house was situated upon the line of the road as it then existed.

Joseph Blood lived on the farm now owned by Edward Cary, on Farmers' Row, which road then formed a portion of the Lancaster Highway, so called.

Nathaniel Blood probably lived at the northern base of Gibbet Hill, a few rods northwest of where Andrew Spaulding's farm barn now stands. Mr. Blood's house was situated on a road long since gone and forgotten. This road left the present Lowell road near the house of Nathaniel Lawrence (now Joseph F. Hall's place), and followed along the western base of Gibbet Hill, and joined the highway, now known as Martin's Pond road, at a point near where the latter road crosses James's Brook.

Richard Blood's home was on the farm owned and occupied by the late Captain William Shattuck, situated on the

road leading from the present Hollis street at the North Common to the river valley. The place is now unoccupied.

Nicholas Cady, for whom the little pond at the south end of the village was named, lived on the farm for so many years owned and carried on by the late Captain Phineas G. Prescott. The pond was probably owned by Mr. Cady, as it has since and does now form a part of the estate.

Benjamin Crisp lived on the farm known many years ago as the Levi Stone place, but in later years termed the John McGilson place. Since Mr. McGilson moved away it has been occupied by John E. Hills, Mrs. Mary A. Mason, and others.

Samuel Davis lived in the part of the town recently known as the "Community." His house was on the north side of the community road, then a part of the Lancaster Highway, a few rods east of the corner where the road turns near the Pollard place. Mr. Davis was shot by an Indian while standing in his open door.

The Benjamin Moors place, now owned by Nathan F. Culver, and situated on the old road to Ayer, was the home of William Elluee. It is possible that this man's name may have been Ellvee, though the former is the spelling found in the record.

Matthias Farnsworth lived on the farm formerly owned by Ephraim Sawtell and now occupied by Henry M. Gaut.

The house lot of James Fiske was situated on the present Main street, probably near where stands the house once owned by Nathaniel P. Smith, in later years by George W. Bancroft, and now owned by John E. Hodgman.

Joseph Gilson lived on the farm which we know as the Ezekiel Needham place, now owned by Charles A. Murphy. After a careful examination of the Proprietors' Records I am confident that the original estate included all the land

west of the present Hollis street which now lies common. The present Champney place also formed a part of Mr. Gilson's home estate.

William Green lived near where Lawrence Academy is now situated. His home estate was on both sides of the main street, and extended in a northerly direction to a line with the present "Meadow Road." This road was built during Mr. Green's time, down to the meadow, but not across, for the purpose of teaming hay off of Broad Meadow. As the inhabitants were obliged to depend upon the low lands for hay for their cattle, ready access to these lands was of course important to them. At about the same time the west end of the Meadow Road, and the road that leaves the road to Ayer (then called the Mill Highway), near the house now owned by John McGilson, were also built as far as the meadow, for the same purpose.

Rev. Gershom Hobart lived near where the Baptist meeting-house stands. He was settled in Groton as the minister, upon the return of the inhabitants after the burning of the town. "All the common land near where the old meeting-house stood" (so reads the record) was granted to him as a part of his farm. This, no doubt, included the lot upon which my father's barns stand, and between these buildings and Hollis street. His farm also included all the land upon the northwest side of the present School street, and the west side of Hollis street to near the line which now divides the land of Joseph B. Raddin and the Champney estate. Mr. Hobart, it is thought, left town about the year 1705, but afterwards returned, and died in Groton. He originally owned a part of the present old burying-ground, which he sold to the town for the purpose to which it has ever since been devoted.

Richard Holden lived probably near where the house

lately occupied by John H. Bishop now stands, on the old road to Ayer.

William Lakin lived on the Walker place, so called, near the cemetery, now owned by John R. Southwick. His brother John lived near the four corners at "Nod," below the soapstone quarry, in the river valley, a short distance below the house where Michael Condon now lives. It is possible that in 1694, at the time the Longley family were killed, William's house was fortified. The records show him to have been an officer in the local military service. These two men were step-sons of William Martin.

The farm now owned by Calvin Corey, and known as the Shepley place, was the home of Joseph Lawrence, and later one Shepley lived upon the same place. Mr. Shepley was living there in 1694, and was killed by the Indians in July of that year, at the time of the Longley massacre. It seems probable from the record, that William Lakin's house was attacked at that time, but the assault was successfully repelled.

Nathaniel Lawrence originally lived on the place now owned by Joseph F. Hall, but subsequently bought and lived upon the farm at present owned by William Peabody.

Peleg Lawrence lived on the Boston road, and probably on the farm now owned by Samuel B. Marshall and previously owned by Winslow P. Nudd.

William Longley, and his father William before him, lived on the farm now owned by Zachariah Fitch. The memorial stone recently erected marks the spot where their home was situated.

William Martin, sometimes called by his neighbors Goodman Martin, lived upon land now owned by my father, and known as the Shattuck place. Mr. Martin's house seems to have stood at the southerly base of the second and highest

of the three "Chestnut Hills." His house probably faced the pond named for him, and stood near where now are some of the remains of an old house taken down a few years ago. The spot is on the farm road, about one half mile from the present Martin's Pond road, but there is now nothing left to show exactly the situation of the house. It is probable that William Lakin's farm (the Walker place) was conveyed to him by his step-father. I am inclined to the opinion that the fence which now divides my father's farm and John R. Southwick's is on the same line that separated the house lots of Goodman Martin and William Lakin in olden time.

It is probable that Mr. Martin reached his house either by passing through his son's land, or by leaving the road near where the house of Alvin C. L. Sawyer now stands, for the records show that in those times there was too much water in what we now know as Hog Swamp to admit of building a road there; and Martin owned nearly all the land bordering on the north side of Martin's Pond road, from his house to Hollis street.

John Nutting lived near the site of the house of the Hon. Daniel Needham. It is probable that some part of the land now occupied by Main street formed a part of Mr. Nutting's house lot, as this street from the corner at the town-pump to the corner of Elm street, near the Baptist meeting-house, was not built until the early part of this century. Prior to that time the present Hollis street was the main highway, and Mr. Nutting's house no doubt faced that street.

Jacob Onge lived on the Reuben Torrey place, now owned and occupied by Parker Fletcher.

John Page lived on the west side of Farmers' Row, probably nearly opposite to the present location of the house now owned by the heirs of the late Edmund Blood.

It is probable that the farms of John Page and Joseph Blood originally comprised all the land bordering on the west side of Farmers' Row, from the corner just south of the present Edmund Blood house to the corner of Farmers' Row and the road leading to Squannacook. The latter road was built at an early day, as far as the river.

Captain James Parker lived on the Dr. Amos B. Bancroft place, where Captain Asa S. Lawrence now lives. His home estate occupied both sides of the present Main street, the northern boundary being James's Brook, probably named for him, and his southerly line was near, if not exactly upon, the line which now separates the land of George D. Brigham from the High School lot and the land of Andrew Robbins, known as the Loring estate. The southerly line upon the east side of the road was no doubt near the present line which separates the Dr. Joshua Green estate from the Brick Store lot.

Captain Parker owned a large part of Half-Moon Meadow, and was the owner of a good deal of real estate in different parts of the town. He was for many years the richest, and in all matters of a secular character, the leading man in town.

Joseph Parker probably lived on the farm known as the James Farnsworth place, subsequently occupied by Charles H. Waters and Isaiah M. Mansur, respectively, and is now the property of Prescott Lawrence.

Daniel Pearce seems to have lived on the road leading from Ridge Hill Tavern to the Sandy Pond station on the Stony Brook Railroad. He, no doubt, lived upon the present Pearce place. This is the only instance of which I have knowledge where a place is now occupied by a person of the same name as the original proprietor. Whether the present owner of this farm is a descendant of the original owner, I do not know.

Jonas Prescott came to Groton about the time of the return of the inhabitants after the destruction of the town by the Indians. He came from Lancaster, where his father, John Prescott, resided. He lived on the Stuart J. Park place. His house probably stood on the knoll nearly opposite to the house of Stephen J. Woods. He was a blacksmith, and his shop seems to have been a little below his house, near the brook. The initials upon the stone which, until a few years ago, remained in the wall at the side of the road between the house of the late John G. Park and that of Stuart J. Park, showed that Jonas Prescott first laid the wall in 1680, soon after he came to Groton. This is probably the oldest structure of any kind in town. Though it is known to have been relaid twice, yet no doubt some, if not many, of the stones now there were first placed by Jonas Prescott.

Alexander Rouse lived on the Samuel Wheeler place, now occupied by Amos P. Carlton.

Richard Sawtell, the first town clerk, lived upon the Eber Woods estate on the road to Ayer, now owned by John McGilson.

Thomas Smith lived on the George W. Bancroft farm, now occupied by Frank F. Woods.

Thomas Tarbell, senior, lived probably on the main street, and near where stands the house formerly owned and occupied by the late Caleb Butler.

Thomas Tarbell, junior, lived upon the now quite famous Lawrence farm on Farmers' Row.

Joshua Whitney seems to have lived upon the farm now known as the Joshua Eaton place, and at present owned by Andrew Robbins. The record designates this as his "first house," and indicates that he subsequently lived in some

other locality, which latter place I have been unable to ascertain.

Rev. Samuel Willard lived near where the high-school house stands. He owned the land on both sides of the main street from the present southerly lines of George D. Brigham and Dr. Samuel A. Green to the Meadow Road on the west side, and on the east side of the main street to near the line which now separates the house lot of Charles H. Waters and the highway which passes by the north side of the Unitarian meeting-house. That portion of the western side of the hill upon which the old meeting-house stands, which is now occupied by the road last mentioned, the meeting-house and the common, was originally the property of William Green.

Mr. Willard preached in the first meeting-house during the entire ten years of its existence, from 1666 until it was destroyed by Indians on the 13th of March, 1676. Mr. Willard did not return to Groton to live after the destruction of the town. He baptized Benjamin Franklin in the Old South meeting-house at Boston, where he was the minister at the time of Franklin's birth.

Samuel Woods seems to have lived on the present Main street, and on the place now owned by the estate of the late Stephen Stickney, and occupied by Dr. Milés Spaulding.

Of the men living in town during the first half of the last century, were Benjamin Prescott, son of Jonas, and the father of Col. William Prescott. He lived upon the estate of his father, but a little further up the hill. The depression caused by the settling of the ground after the cellar was filled is now visible in the old garden spot of Stuart J. Park's day, just south of the house of Willard H. Giles, near the road.

I have learned from Miss Farnsworth the places of resi-

dence of four of the daughters of Jonas Prescott. One of these, the wife of (probably James) Parker of the Captain Parker family, perhaps a son, lived upon the site of Eliel Shumway's house. Another, Elizabeth, married Eleazer, a son of William Green. They lived in the house which has for many years been occupied by Luther G. Osborn. This is probably the oldest building in town, and it is likely that it was built by Eleazer Green, or by his father for him, and upon a part of his father's estate. Another sister was the wife of John Longley, who was son of William, and was captured at the time when his parents and five brothers and sisters were killed by Indians, but he afterwards escaped. They lived on the Stephen Kendall farm, now owned by Jackson N. Potter. Another, the wife of Benjamin Farnsworth, lived on the east side of the same road upon which the Stephen Kendall place is situated, and nearly opposite the house formerly occupied by the late William Kilbourn. Here, also, in the field, a short distance back from the road, can be seen the depression of the earth which followed the filling of the cellar. Miss Farnsworth says that she was once in the house when a child, but the building was taken down many years ago. She also says she has been told that still another of the Prescott sisters lived down back of the present Unitarian meeting-house, but as to the exact location of the house she is not informed. It is probable that this may have been Mrs. Samuel Parker.

Joseph Page lived on the George Farnsworth place on Farmers' Row, now occupied by Clifford R. Weld.

William Tarbell, familiarly called by his neighbors Will Tarbell, lived on Farmers' Row, upon the farm now owned by the heirs of the late Osgood Putnam. He was a son of Thomas Tarbell, junior, and grandfather of the late Colonel Abel and Asa Tarbell of Squannacook.

These men were of the founders of our grand old town. Of the hardships, privations and dangers to which they and their families were subjected we can at this day have no conception; but what they did is indeed of value, as well as of interest, to us all. And what did they do? What is founding? The fact is simply that on each succeeding day they did as best they could the work of that day. The great majority of the good people of the present day in Groton, as in all well-ordered communities, are doing likewise. Who can tell what foundations we may even now be laying, or what manner of structure may be built thereon?

