

**S K E T C H**  
**of**  
**N A N T A S K E T :**

**(NOW CALLED HULL,)**

**IN THE**  
**COUNTY OF PLYMOUTH.**

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## NANTASKET.

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“ On the left hand of Boston harbour is a beautiful little peninsula, called N——— ; it consists of two gradually rising hills, beautifully diversified with orchards, cornfields and pasture land. In the valley is built a little village, consisting of about fifty houses, the inhabitants of which could just make a shift to decently support a minister, who on a Sunday ascended the pulpit, in a rustic temple, situated by side of a piece of water, nearly in the middle of the village, and taught, to the utmost of his abilities, the true principles of Christianity. The neck of land that joins this peninsula to the main is extremely narrow, and indeed is sometimes almost overflowed by the tide. On one side it forms a charming picturesque harbor, in which are a variety of small but delightfully fertile islands, and on the other it is washed by the ocean, to which it lays open. In this enchanting village stood Mr. Abthorpe's house ; in the midst of a neat and well cultivated garden, and here it was as the spring advanced our contemplative heroine beheld with rapture the rapid progress of the infant vegetation, for the earth seemed hardly released from the fleecy garb of winter, before it burst forth in the full bloom of vernal pride.”

In the above picture, sketched by an accomplished lady,\* now no more, the reader who has passed the grand climacteric will recognize the village of Hull, as it appeared previous to the American Revolution. As we are fond of delving into the history of our ancient settlements, and of cherish-

\* Mrs. Rowson.

ing the associations called up by such researches, it will correspond better with our feelings and our taste to retain the name by which this interesting place was known to the first settlers of the country—NANTASKET. It is matter of regret that the original of the above picture does not possess all those traces of beauty which gave it a peculiar charm to the eye of the excellent lady who drew it ;—especially that the rustic temple in which the village pastor taught to the utmost of his abilities, the true principles of Christianity, has long since fallen in ruins before the strength of the whirlwind.

We propose to gather a few memorials of the settlement of this ancient town, and of the individuals who have resided there, which have come in our way, in our antiquarian gleanings, among early histories and the village records.

The first building in Nantasket, (or as it was sometimes called Natasco, Nantasco, and Nantas-cot,) was erected by the Plymouth people “to accommodate their trade with the Massachusetts”\* as early as, or before the year 1624. This was doubtless a mere store-house. In that year, John Oldham of distinguished notoriety in the early history of Massachusetts and Plymouth Colonies, and who came to the latter in 1623, was expelled from it for seditious practices.† In his efforts to disturb the peace of the colony, Mr. Lyford and others participated. Secretary Morton speaks of their conduct with the utmost severity, but, as is observed by the learned editor of Winthrop’s Journal, “Hubbard suggests to our judgment some reasonable cautions in perusing the Plymouth Secretary.”‡ Oldham was a bold and enterprising man, strongly prejudiced against the rigid church discipline of Plymouth, and not much inclined to respect the territorial rights of the colonists. He was in high esteem among the natives,

\* Prince, 150.      † Ibid.

‡ Winthrop’s Journal, I. 80, note,

and afterwards secured the friendship of the people of New England. His murder by the Block Island Indians was a principal incitement to the famous Pequot war. This man was the first planter of Nantasket. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fix the exact time when he settled there, but there is sufficient reason for the belief, that it was in the year 1624. We know that the editor of Winthrop informs us on the authority of Hubbard, that Nantasket was planted in 1625, by Lyford, Oldham and Conant,\* and in his argument on the authenticity of the Wheelwright deed, Oldham is mentioned as living at Nantasket in 1625.† But Morton, in his Memorial, gives a minute account of the proceedings had against Oldham and Lyford in 1624, and of Oldham's expulsion from Plymouth in that year. The editor of that work says upon his expulsion from Plymouth, he removed to Nantasket. Prince says, in giving an account of the conduct of Oldham and Lyford, "the Court expelled them from the Colony ; Oldham *presently* (1624) though his wife and family had leave to stay the winter, or till he can make provision to remove them comfortably. He goes and settles at *Natasco*, i. e. *Nantasket* (at the entrance of *Massachusetts Bay*) where the *Plymouth* people had before set up a building to accommodate their trade with the *Massachusetts* : and there Mr. *Roger Conant* and *some others* retire and stay a *year* and *some few months*. Lyford has leave to stay *six months*.‡" Dr. Holmes in his Annals speaks of the removal of Conant and Lyford from Nantasket in 1625, after having remained "a year and some few months."|| Both Prince and Holmes derive their facts from Hubbard. Baylies, in his Memoir of New Plymouth, recently published, dates the

\* Winthrop's Journal, vol. I. p. 43, note.

† Winthrop's Journal, vol. I. p. 420.

‡ Prince's Chronology, p. 150.

|| Holmes's Annals, vol. I. p. 236.

settlement of Nantasket in 1624. Prince again says early in the year 1625, "This winter Mr. White with the Dorchester adventurers hearing of some religious persons lately removed from New-Plimouth to Nantasket, from dislike of their rigid principles, among whom was Mr. Roger Conant, a pious, sober, and prudent gentleman; they choose Mr. Conant to manage their affairs at Cape Ann, both of planting and fishing. They also invite Mr. Lyford to be minister to the plantation."\* Morton and Prince both state that *Oldham returned* to Plymouth in March 1625, and that he was expelled again with Lyford. Mr. Baylies describes these occurrences according to Hubbard, Morton and Prince.† Hutchinson also makes the settlement of Nantasket to have been in 1624.‡

It is however of little moment whether the place we are describing was settled in 1624 or 1625. The fact, if clearly established, would be as unimportant to us, as to those whose ashes were long since mingled with those of the great congregation of the dead.

We consider then, Oldham, Lyford and Conant to have been the first settlers of the beautiful peninsula which we have described. Oldham was a man of talent, enterprize and courage, as we have before stated. Lyford entertained similar views with him, although he was not so illiterate, nor so furious in his temper. Conant is described as a man of great worth. We know not who the associates of these persons were, nor have we any means of ascertaining. The town records do not extend back so far. We are inclined to suppose, however, that they were possessed of a respectable property; for in Bradford,|| there is an account of an apportionment of the charges of the expedition to Merry Mount in 1628, to arrest Morton, from

\* Prince 151—152. † Baylies's *Memoir*, vol. I. p. 198.

‡ Hutchinson's *His. of Mass.* vol. I. p. 15.

|| 1. *His. Coll.* iii. 63.

which it would seem that "Natascot" was then of considerable importance. The assessment was as follows :

Plymouth	£2.10	Thomson	£0.15
Naumkeak	1.10	Blackston	0.12
Pascataquack	2.10	Edward Hilton	1.00
Jeffrey & Burslem	2.00		
Natascot	1.10	Total,	£12.07

Nantasket, it seems, at that early date, bore about one eighth part of the expenses of the Colonies ! The town now pays about a 134th part of the expenses of Plymouth County alone ! and about a 3000th part of the expenses of the State of Massachusetts !

The population of Nantasket during the first years of its settlement was probably very fluctuating. It was a convenient stopping place, for many of the first adventurers, who remained no longer than to obtain time to explore the bay and country, for a place of settlement more favourable to agricultural pursuits, for it must be borne in mind that Nantasket was a fishing village, and the beautiful eminences of Strawberry, Sagamore, Alderton and Nantasket Hills, as well as the extended plains which lie at their base, were then covered with a heavy growth of forest trees. Now scarcely one is to be seen within the limits of the town. The hand of cultivation has long since divested the ancient hills of their "crown of oaks" and the plains upon which the wild deer could plunge for security, into the deep recesses of the forest, are now scarcely shaded by a solitary relic of those majestic ornaments and monarchs of the woods.

In 1629, Rev. Ralph Smith came from Salem and settled at Nantasket. There is reason to believe that the place was not so flourishing as it had been, for the inhabitants are spoken of by Prince, on the authority of Bradford, as a "straggling people," and in the same year, he says "some Plymouth people putting in with a boat at *Natasco*,



find Mr. Smith in a poor house that would not keep him dry. He desires them to carry him to Plymouth, and seeing him to be a grave man, and understanding he had been a minister, they bring him hither, where we kindly entertain him, send for his goods and servants, desire him to exercise his gifts among us ; afterwards chuse him into the ministry; wherein he remains for sundry years.”\*

It would seem from this record of Prince that Smith “*had been*” a minister, and not that he was called to exercise his gifts at Nantasket. The editor of Winthrop says, that the earliest notice of Smith is contained in the Governor and Company’s letter to Endecott in 1629, and “his difference in judgment in some things from our ministers” is therein referred to as a caution against distraction in the Salem church† His name is mentioned by Morton but in no terms of respect. He resigned his office at Plymouth in 1635, and he afterwards preached at Manchester. He was said to have been “a man of low gifts and parts.”

In 1630, May 30, Rev. John Warham, Rev. John Maverick, Roger Ludlow (afterwards Deputy Governor of Massachusetts) with Rossiter and others, arrived at Nantasket, in the ship Mary and John, Capt. Squeb. From thence, they took a boat of the “old planters,” went up Charles River, and settled at Matapan, now Dorchester. The event of the landing of this respectable company of emigrants, was celebrated at Nantasket, on the two hundredth anniversary, which was on the 11th day of June last, by nearly one hundred of the inhabitants of Dorchester. An address was delivered on the occasion by Rev. Dr. Codman. Among the persons present on this interesting occasion, were several of the lienal descendants of Capt. Roger Clap, who was one of the company who came over in the Mary and John. A paper was subscribed on the spot containing ninety eight

\* Prince 188, 189.      † Winthrop’s Journal, I. 91, note.

names of the inhabitants of Dorchester, present on the occasion, and left to be filed and preserved by the town clerk of Hull, for the inspection of generations to come.

The assessment on Nantasket in 1630, was one pound; the whole tax on the Colony was £50. In 1631, Nantasket paid ten shillings of a tax of £30 on the colony, and in 1632, the place does not appear to have been assessed.

At a very early date, after the settlement of Hingham, which was subsequent to that of Nantasket, there was a controversy respecting a portion of the lands within the limits of the latter place. The inhabitants of Hingham claimed them, as appears by their proceedings in July 1643, which are recorded as follows :

“There is chosen by the town Joseph Peck, Bozoan Allen, Anthony Eames, and Joshua Hubbard to go to the next Court to make the best improvement the town have for the property of Nantascot, and to answer the suit that now depends.”

In the records of the General Court,\* there is recorded the following decision on the matter in dispute :

“The former grant to Nantascot was again voted and confirmed, and Hingham were willed to forbear troubling the Court any more about Nantascot.” This was in September, 1643.

A church was formed at Nantasket in July, 1644, and in the same year, under date of July 15th, Winthrop says, “Natascott being formerly made a town and having now twenty houses and a minister, was by the last general court named HULL. The editor of Winthrop supposes; that the town was so named in honor of Joseph Hull, of Hingham, who was admitted to the freeman’s oath, September 2, 1635, and that the minister, mentioned by Winthrop, was Rev. Marmaduke Matthews, for in the records of the General Court, at the May

\* I. Vol. ii. p. 35.

session, 1649, it appears that a Petition was received from the inhabitants of Hull, for the encouraging Mr. Matthews to go to them, and preach amongst them." The order of the magistrates on this petition, was as follows: "The Court judge it no way meet to grant the inhabitants of Hull their desire for Mr. Matthews *returning* to them, nor residing with them, and do declare that they find several erroneous expressions, others, weak, inconvenient and unsafe, for which it judgeth meet to order that the said Mr. Matthews should be admonished by the Government in the name of this Court." Matthews was called to the church at Malden.

The following record is found in the doings of the Court, 26 May, 1647:

"There being now divers fishermen of good ability in Hull, who may comfortably carry on the affairs of a town, they are enabled by the authority of this Court, to order the prudential affairs of that town, according to former orders, of this court, and course of other plantations, provided that according to former orders of Court, they endeavor the advancement of fishing, and that such fishermen as are there already and others which shall come thither, may have all such reasonable privileges and encouragement as the place will afford, and that such places as are fit for fishermen, may be reserved for that purpose, and with this caution also, that William Parks, Mr. Glover, and Mr. Duncan, or any two of them be appointed to see the order of Court for advance of fishing duly observed."

In 1657, we find in the town records of Hull, the first evidence of grants of land. The following named persons received grants of land in that year:

John Stone; \*Thomas Jones, 1638; \*John Benson, 1638; \*Henry Chamberlyn, 1638; \*Benjamin Boswerth, 1635; Richard Stubbes; \*Nicholas Baker, 1635; Thomas Collier; John Loring;

\*Thomas Chaffe, 1637 ; William Chamberlyn ; Edward Bunne. (Binney ?) ; Nathaniel Bosworth ; \*John Prince, 1639 ; George Vickere ; \*Samuell Ward, 1636 ; \*Thomas Loring, 1635 ; Abraham Jones.\*

Persons of the the same name as those of the above to whom the asterisk is prefixed, had received grants of land in Hingham, in the several years affixed to their names.

The names of Phippeny, Goold, Binney, Soper, Nightingale, Street, Green, Lobdell, Bartlett, Rider, Dilley (Dill,) Dixon, Whitman, Snow, and Milton, afterwards appear in the records and most of them before the year 1700. All these names are now extinct in Nantasket, excepting those of Jones, Binney, Loring, Goold, and Dill.

The first regularly ordained minister over the church and people of Nantasket, was Rev. Zechariah Whitman, a graduate of the University at Cambridge, in 1668. Mr. Whitman was ordained at Nantasket, September 13, 1670. His salary was forty pounds. He continued at Nantasket, officiating in the ministry until near the time of his decease, which took place November 5, 1726.—He appears to have secured the affections of the people, for the town voted after his decease, to pay his children for his maintenance “while he lived and did not preach.”

In March, 1724—5, the town voted to call a minister to be ordained, and chose a committee to invite Mr. Clapp and Mr. Carpenter to preach as candidates. In May, the town voted to fix the ministers' salary at seventy pounds, and his settlement at one hundred pounds.

In June, 1725, the town voted to invite Mr. Carpenter to settle in the ministry, and in August, his answer was accepted in the affirmative. In October, the day of ordination was fixed on the

\* The orthography of the records is preserved in the above names.

24th November, and fifteen pounds were appropriated to defray the expenses. Rev. Ezra Carpenter preached in Nantasket until the year 1746, and is the same gentleman probably who was installed at Keene, in 1753.

In 1751, Mr. Elisha Eaton, a graduate of Harvard in 1729, and in 1752, Mr. Samuel Hill, of Marshfield, and a graduate of Harvard in 1735, were invited to settle at Nantasket, but they do not appear to have accepted the invitations.

In January, 1753, the town invited Rev. Samuel Veazie, of Duxbury, and a graduate of Harvard, in 1736, to become their minister. This invitation was accepted, and Mr. Veazie was ordained in April, 1753. Difficulties arose in 1765, respecting his salary, and he was obliged to resort to the unpleasant dilemma of suing the town for his salary. The matter was compromised, however, and Mr. Veazie was dismissed by an ecclesiastical council, held in July, 1767.

In 1768, March 21, Rev. Solomon Prentice was invited to preach. He appears to have been employed until the autumn of 1772. A gentleman of this name was graduated at Harvard in 1727.

In 1773, August 16, Rev. Elkanah Winchester, Jun. was invited to preach, but he probably did not continue at Nantasket a great length of time.

In 1774, May 2, the following vote was passed in town meeting.

Voted, That the present Selectmen be a committee to provide a preacher for the term of six months, and that none of the Baptist persuasion be debarred the pulpit because of his being of that denomination, but on the other hand, rather to be preferred on that very account. Nevertheless, those of the inhabitants that are for a Congregational preacher only, be accommodated with such a preacher, (provided they desire it) in proportion to their paying the public charges according to the tax bill, and that the money arising by the rents of

the parsonage lands for the last year be appropriated purely to support the Gospel, and in case that shall not be judged sufficient for the appointed time of said committee, the remainder to be made up by subscription, or a free contribution."

The above vote shows the existence of different religious opinions among the people, and their liberality towards each other. From this time, however, no regular preaching was supported constantly. The town suffered much by the war of the revolution, and a diminution of the means of the inhabitants, together with the differences of religious opinion have been obstacles to the settlement of a minister. A preacher is occasionally employed, but no regular church is now in existence in Nantasket.

The meeting house erected in 1734, and before described as "a rustic temple, situated by side of a piece of water, nearly in the middle of the village," was blown down by the violent gale in September, 1815. A small meeting house was erected by the Methodists, in that part of the town next to Hingham, a few years since, but it is opened only occasionally for public worship.

The sufferings of the town in consequence of the Revolutionary War, have been adverted to.—Notwithstanding these, however, the inhabitants appear to have approved of resistance against Great Britain, for as early as June 1774, there is the following record by the town clerk :

"The letter of correspondence was read, and *unanimously* approved the measures concerted, in breaking off all commerce with Great Britain, as a mean the most likely to obtain relief."

In 1775, March 27, the Town Treasurer was ordered to pay over all monies raised for the Province, to Henry Gardner, Esq. appointed Treasurer by the Provincial Congress.

In 1776, March 28, it was Voted, That the Selectmen petition the Great and General Court,

praying that in consideration of the sufferings and distress which (in consequence of the present calamitous and unnatural war) have of late befallen the town of Hull, they would be pleased to grant the inhabitants thereof such favor or assistance as they in their wisdom shall think fit."

A similar petition was presented in 1777.

Before the Revolution, there were owned in Nantasket, fifteen fishing vessels. The war, of course, destroyed the profitable portion of their business, in which those vessels were engaged, and brought upon the town much of the distress and suffering above mentioned.

In 1780, June 14, a committee was chosen to procure "the soldiers sent for," to be paid in Corn, Beef, and Sheep's Wool. In November, of that year, £2700 were raised "to pay the DILLS for serving three months in the Continental Army."

In 1781, January 15, the town voted to procure "three men sent for to serve three years in the Continental Army."

From this vote we learn what was the quota required of the patriotic inhabitants of Nantasket, and the fact of their prompt support of the cause of independence, notwithstanding the temporary suffering which it caused them to endure. One of the soldiers who went out from Nantasket to defend the rights of his country, is yet living to enjoy the bounty of a grateful nation. His name is Lemuel Dill.

Although the town has the right of being represented in the State Legislature, it has seldom been exercised. In the Convention which approved of the Constitution of the U. States, in 1788, Thomas Jones, Esq. was chosen to represent the town.

In 1721, the town voted, that no tavern or public house should be kept within its limits. There was, however, one house of this description before the revolution, which is said by Mrs. Rowson, to have "had custom scarcely sufficient to supply its venerable mistress with the necessaries of life ;

but she had a garden, a cow, and a few acres of land, the produce of these were sufficient to her wants and wishes, and she would sit in her matted arm-chair, in a room whose only beauty was "the white-washed wall, the nicely sanded floor" while the smile of content played about her face, and while she thankfully enjoyed the bounties of heaven, she remembered not that any could be richer or happier than herself." There are now two houses of entertainment in the village of Nantasket, and a third at the head of that fashionable place of resort, NANTASKET BEACH.

There were formerly in this village about fifty houses. It contains at the present time but half that number. The town seems, however, to be increasing slowly in prosperity and in population. Six vessels are owned in the place, employed in the bay.

The population was in 1810, 132 souls—in 1820, 172—and the present year, it amounts to 198, including the inhabitants of the islands.

A school is supported in the place for seven months in each year.

One son of Nantasket has been graduated at the University of Cambridge. This was Israel Loring. He was a son of John and Rachel Loring, and was born April 15, 1682, and was graduated in 1701. He studied divinity, and was settled in the ministry at Sudbury, November 20, 1706.—He died March 9, 1772, in the 90th year of his age, having preached on the first day of the month. "He was a venerable man, of primitive piety and manners, and faithful and useful in the ministerial work. He had preached for near seventy years." He published an election and several other sermons.\*

Of the eminences in Nantasket, *Strawberry Hill*, takes its name from the abundance of the delicious berry of that name, formerly found there. *Sagamore Hill* was probably the residence of some Indian Sachem. *Point Alderton* is named for Isaac

\* Allen's Biographical Dictionary.



Allerton or Alderton, the first assistant of Plymouth.†

*Skull Head* was so named, tradition says, in commemoration of a great Indian battle, fought between the natives of the North and South Shores, and the bones of the killed were to be seen there at the settlement of the country.

The Hill north of the village, was fortified in the revolutionary war, and was a station for troops.—The mounds of the fort still remain visible. Within them, there is a well nearly one hundred feet in depth.

The commanding situation of this hill, has attracted the attention of our government for the purpose of constructing expensive fortifications to defend Boston Harbor. In a report from the Engineer Department, made to Congress in 1827, which “exhibits those fortifications of which plans have been made by the board of Engineers, but which have not yet been commenced, arranged in classes, according to the order in which they should be commenced, with an estimate of the cost of each,” the projected works at Nantasket and the adjacent islands are placed in the first class. The following is a table, shewing the estimate of the probable cost of the fortifications :

Fort on Nantasket Head	\$539,000 00
Lanette in advance of do.	79,000 00
Redoubt No. 2 in advance of do.	32,000 00
Redoubt No. 1 (on Hog Island) in advance of do.	29,000 00
Dyke across broad sound passage	140,000 00
Cutting off the summit of Gallop Island	2,429 51
Fort on George's Island	458,000 00
	<hr/>
	\$1,279,429 51

† Hutchinson ii. 411.

The erection of the fortifications at Nantasket would give a new aspect to the appearance of the town, and might contribute to its prosperity if made a considerable military post.

The principal employment of the inhabitants of Nantasket is Agriculture. Some are engaged in the coasting trade and fisheries.

The soil is very fertile, and abundantly productive. Finer slopes of land than may be seen on any of the hills, are not to be found in the Commonwealth.

Thus much we have been able to gather respecting the settlement, history, and present state of Nantasket. The facts which are here collected, may afford some interest to those who are fond of tracing the history of our ancient settlements ; and who think every thing hallowed which has the charm of antiquity. These gleanings may at least suggest useful reflections to some of those who resort to this beautiful place for health, or amusement. The "gay" will sometimes love to be led back in imagination, to the times when the "great and good" who are gone, first placed foot upon these shores, and the "grave" will take a peculiar pleasure in contemplating the character of men like Conant, and Maverick, and Warham, whose piety and virtues shed a beautiful lustre upon the age in which they lived.

The surf-beaten rocks and green hills of Nantasket are perpetual memorials to remind us of those who first planted amongst them the standard of the cross, and the moaning waves continually beating upon its silvery sands, and dying along its shores, will forever sound their peaceful requium. L.

ERRATUM. Since the first twelve pages were struck off, it has been ascertained that the Methodist meeting house mentioned on the 12th page, is not in Hull, but within the limits of Cohasset.