

Some Friends Mentioned in the Early Records of the Dartmouth Monthly Meeting

Compiled by Richard Gifford

Peleg Slocum (d.1728) married Mary Holder. Her father, Christopher Holder, was a Quaker missionary who preached at secret meetings in Sandwich at a place in the woods called "Christopher's Hollow", where his audience likely included members of the Allen, Gifford, Kirby and Wing families who later migrated to Dartmouth. Christopher Holder's missionary work later took him to Massachusetts Bay Colony, where he was sentenced to prison and had his right ear cut off.

Among those coming to Boston in 1658 to protest Holder's punishment was his future wife, Mary Scott, the niece of Ann Hutchinson, a previous victim of Boston's religious intolerance. Scott was herself imprisoned and whipped, and sent away with the warning that if she ever returned she would be hung. Scott said "If God call us I question not He whom we love will make us not count our lives dear unto ourselves for the sake of his name." Gov. Endicott replied: "And we shall be as ready to take away your lives as ye to lay them down."

Peleg Slocum was a "public Friend" [preacher] and sailed to Nantucket several times with the Quaker missionaries John Richardson and Thomas Story. They focused on converting Mary (Coffin) Starbuck, calculating that her influence among the islanders was so great that her conversion would lead others to follow suit.

Before construction of the original Apponegansett Meeting House, and occasionally thereafter, meetings were held at the house of Peleg Slocum, located on Horseneck Road near the northwest corner of what is now Dartmoor Farm. Slocum owned about 1600 acres of land in Dartmouth and also owned the islands of Cuttyhunk, Penikese and Nashawena. He donated the land where the Apponegansett Meeting House was built.

Benjamin Howland (1659-1727) was the son of Zoeth Howland, who was killed by Indians in the early stages of King Philip's War in Tiverton, RI at a place ever since called "Sin and Flesh Brook" while traveling from Dartmouth to a Quaker meeting in Newport. Benjamin lived at Round Hill, South Dartmouth, and his descendants include the miserly but savvy Hetty Howland (Robinson) Green, "The Witch of Wall Street."

John Lapham (1635-1710) married Mary Mann. The decision to build the Apponegansett Meeting House was made at a meeting held at Lapham's house on Rock o' Dundee Road. His great-granddaughter Rhoda (Lapham) Harris lived in Palmyra, NY and was a neighbor of Joseph Smith Jr, the founder of the Mormon religion. Rhoda's son Martin Harris was one of "The Three Witnesses" who Smith showed the golden plates on which the Book of Mormon was inscribed. Harris wrote down Smith's first dictation, the Book of Lehi, but his performance proved unsatisfactory --- he took the transcription home to show his wife, and "the lost 116 pages" were never recovered. Nonetheless, Harris mortgaged his farm to finance the first publication of the Book of Mormon. Rhoda (Lapham) Harris' descendants include numerous luminaries of the Mormon church, including two presidents of Brigham Young University.

Deliverance Smith (ca1660-1729) married Mary Tripp. A selectman of Dartmouth, Smith was imprisoned in 1708 for refusing to collect the "minister tax" which was mandated to pay the salaries of Congregational ministers in Massachusetts towns.

David Anthony (1747-1831) married Judith Hicks. David's brother William Anthony Jr was a longtime clerk of the Dartmouth MM. David and Judith were the great-grandparents of the civil rights activist Susan Brownell Anthony. Susan's grandmother, Hannah (Lapham) Anthony was the great-granddaughter of John Lapham above.

Stephen Wilcox (1668-1736) married 1) Susanna Briggs, 2) Judith (Coffin) (Folger) Barnard. Grandson of Mayflower passenger John Cooke and great-grandson of the Pilgrims Francis Cooke and Richard Warren, Wilcox built the ca1720 house in Westport that later became the Westport Town Farm. His father Daniel Wilcox was at the center of a conspiracy to detach Tiverton and Little Compton from Massachusetts and have them made a part of Rhode Island, a result obtained by royal decree some 50 years later, in a reaction against Plymouth Colony's annexation in 1692 by the less tolerant Massachusetts Bay Colony. The threat was deemed so dangerous that Gov. William Phipps dispatched a company of 46 soldiers to arrest Wilcox and his henchmen.

Eliezer Slocum (ca1664-1727) married Elephel Fitzgerald. Eliezer was the brother of Peleg Slocum and lived at the south end of Barney's Joy Road. By tradition, his wife belonged to the FitzGerald family who were hereditary Earls of Kildare. Elephel's older sister wanted to marry a British army officer, but her father forbid the marriage, remembering that many years before British soldiers had killed his ancestor, "Silken Thomas" FitzGerald, 10th Earl of Kildare, following an Irish revolt against Henry VIII. The sister eloped with the officer, taking along Elephel on a voyage to America, beyond the reach of her father's influence. The product of Anglo-Irish aristocracy somehow ended up marrying the Quaker Eliezer, and Elephel settled down to the quiet simple life of a Quaker wife. But occasionally her sister would come to visit, with spectators gawking as her luxurious carriage driven by footmen in full livery trundled down to Slocum's Neck.