



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE larger portion of the text of the following historical sketch of the town of Weymouth, Mass., was originally published in the "History of Norfolk County, Mass.," recently issued by Messrs. J. W. Lewis & Co., from the press of J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, and was intended merely to answer the needs of such a publication. The volume being a large one, and the price heavy, the circulation, even in the town, has been extremely limited, and comparatively few of its inhabitants know that such a work has been placed before the public, so that the wants of the people for more knowledge of their own local history have not been met, even to the limited extent covered by this sketch.

The committee of the town, to which was referred the matter of collecting materials for a town history, finding the work growing upon its hands, with no probability of accomplishing the purpose of its creation for a considerable time, and knowing that the call for some result of its labor is becoming more and more urgent, has decided to republish the sketch in a form for convenient circulation among the people at a moderate expense, with the addition of much original matter, including full notes upon important points where the brevity of the original text requires it, and also a full index, an addition imperatively demanded by the readers of the present day, especially in works of this character.

In thus answering temporarily the public want, in this direction, while the more complete and thorough history of the town awaits its accomplishment, the committee believes it has acted for the best interests of the town, and in accordance with the

opinions of the best historical scholars who are familiar with such matters and whose advice has been taken.

In the experience of the past, the attempt to prepare and publish at a first draft even a local history has not resulted successfully, and it has been found necessary in a short time to go over the ground again for the correction of errors and to incorporate the results of more thorough research; and it has been found a much more judicious plan to publish first a preliminary work, covering briefly the ground, in order to draw out criticism and new material, of which there is much in every community of which no one but the possessors knows anything, and oftentimes of which even they are ignorant, and also for the correction of errors, of which the most carefully prepared work will contain many.

It is with such ideas that the committee has decided to place this sketch before the public: first, to present in brief the information already in its hands; and second, to inspire an enthusiasm upon the subject which shall induce more thorough search for the hidden material now beyond its reach, yet so necessary to the committee in the prosecution of its work to a successful result; and by this is meant the production of such a history of the town as shall be satisfactory to its inhabitants, and answer the requirements of the students of history who have so long demanded it.

It must, therefore, be constantly borne in mind that this is but an incomplete, preliminary work and not a full, elaborate history; and if many things are missing, or stated with too great brevity, it is from the nature of the work, and consequently, too much should not be expected. It should also be remembered that this is put forward with the design to enlist the aid of all who have an interest in the town's good name in doing what they can to enable the committee to complete its purpose.

The town of Weymouth is, next to Plymouth, the oldest English settlement in Massachusetts. It has a rich and, in some respects, a unique history, interesting alike to its own people and to the scholars of the country, and the want of its record has been long felt and deplored. Its early settlers were numerous, men of character and enterprise, while its emigrants soon found their way into other sections, where their descendants

are now found in large numbers scattered from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the English Provinces on the north to the Mexican Gulf on the south.

From these multitudes and the friends they have acquired, there comes a constant appeal for a history of the mother town, an earnest desire for some knowledge more than they now possess of the original home of their ancestors in this land. Not only from these, but from the scholars who are making the history of our country their study, comes the continual inquiry for this same information, and it was for the purpose of supplying this demand that this committee was formed, and it is with this end in view that an appeal is made for assistance in prosecuting the work.

In collecting materials and writing a history of this town, besides the difficulties that are usually met in such an undertaking, there are others of a peculiar character, not found, probably, in any other locality, very hard to overcome or solve, which require the utmost patience and perseverance with the nicest discrimination and judgment in their treatment.

It is highly probable that, previous to 1620, there were temporary camps upon the territory now Weymouth, formed by the fishermen and traders who visited the New England coast to carry on with better facilities their traffic with the natives. Here seems to have been an important rendezvous for the Indians, and there are traces now remaining of several of their settlements upon the shores of the bay. Here, also, centre the old Indian trails leading from the territories at the south, now covered by Plymouth, Bristol, and Norfolk Counties. It was a point easily accessible by sea and land, and thus of great value for this purpose.

It was not, however, until the settlement at Plymouth was begun that any attempt at actual occupation was made and real possession taken. That enterprise, so feeble and of so little promise, crystallized into practical purpose the thought that perhaps had lain undeveloped in the minds of many; and Thomas Weston, a well-known and prominent merchant of London, who had been the agent of the Pilgrims in their negotiations with the Plymouth Company, and who, on account of some trouble with his associates in the business, had broken off his connection

with them, undertook the establishment of a colony upon his own account which should, in a better location, combine all the advantages of the Plymouth Colony without its drawbacks. That company were flying from the persecutions of the powers in authority at home, and thus without any governmental support, which could not fail of being a serious hindrance. They were without strong financial backing, — a most important factor in the movement and one of great necessity. They brought with them their families, which could hardly fail to become a source of much inconvenience, to say the least, in the early stages of a commercial adventure.

These evils the new company of Mr. Weston were entirely to avoid; they were to be a trading community pure and simple, intent only upon developing the natural resources of the new country and of putting money into their own treasury. The favor of the government could be secured beyond doubt by the promise of a share in the profits; capital would flow in readily at the flattering pictures drawn by the adventurers, and the company who were to occupy the post and transact the business were such as could be obtained from the surplus population of London, men used to peril and hardship and familiar with the coast; and, also, an important consideration, without the incumbrance of families. What if they were without trades, without any special training for the particular business in hand, and even destitute of the high principle and purpose that animated their Pilgrim neighbors? So much the better for the practical business before them.

In the light of subsequent history it is very easy to see that such an enterprise, conceived in such a spirit, composed of such materials, and carried on in such a manner, could have but one result, and that, failure. It is, therefore, no surprise, when the record tells the sad story of the few months of hardship, suffering, and death, and of total failure in every respect. But even this was not without benefit to coming and permanent settlers who were very soon to occupy the same ground. The benefit of the location was assured, the character of the soil and its capabilities better known, and its general advantages of position and convenience placed beyond question.

The failure of Weston's colony in 1622 and 1623 opened

the way for another and more permanent possession. Capt. Robert Gorges, himself also an adventurer, the son of Sir Fernando Gorges, possessor of a patent, covering, by an elastic rendering of its terms, the territory about the bay now known as Boston Harbor, recognizing the advantages of its position, and believing, also, in the certain success of a trading colony, prepared an expedition having the same end in view and upon very nearly the same basis, but with these exceptions; the men composing it, although from the same region of country, were of a much higher grade and with families, thus affording foundation for permanence. It had also a religious element which the previous company lacked. It brought a chaplain, backed by the authority of the Church of England, clothed with power sufficient to cover any emergency that would be likely to arise. This company had also a promise of official support and financial encouragement sufficient to insure its success under ordinary circumstances. It had also among its members men of standing and education. With these elements of prosperity, its prospects were quite flattering; and when, in the summer and early autumn of 1623, the company took up its residence upon or near the recently deserted site of Weston's settlement, the outlook was a bright one. The location was excellent, the soil amply sufficient for the wants to which they intended to put it, the prospects for trade encouraging, and no enemies in the vicinity who were to be feared.

There was, however, one serious lack, and that was of importance enough to weaken the political structure and to cause in a short time its practical dissolution. It was simply a trading colony, and all the elements composing it were intended but to promote the acquisition of wealth to its proprietors; the real basis of a permanent colony was lacking. There was no common bond, save that of money, to bind its members together; and when the hardships of a New England winter came upon them, and the profits of the enterprise did not flow in to realize their anticipations, there was nothing to sustain their courage, which soon gave way, and they were scattered, and Wessagusset remained almost as before.

The almost consisted in this: a few of the more resolute, and possibly desperate, remained behind, retaining possession of the

ground and such remnants of political and religious or ecclesiastical power as had survived the wreck. These were added to from year to year by the slow process of emigration, the tide of which was just beginning to set its feeble course towards these shores, but which was destined so to increase that in process of the next twenty years it was numbered by many thousands. It was some ten or a dozen years before the settlement became a power in the colony of sufficient consequence to attract the notice and authority of its neighbors in Plymouth and Boston, and then it had become so strong as to be difficult to manage.

It was then that the development began of one of the principal sources of trouble the historian finds in searching for the origin of the town's history, — the lack of materials and the reason of their non-appearance. The Weston Colony was wholly transient, needing no records and leaving none. The Gorges Company was attempted in the interests of the government and the church; but its internal and local troubles were such as to forbid any regular and systematic record of its proceedings. It was naturally inimical to Plymouth, because the former was the offspring of official patronage, while the latter was born and grew in spite of it. Hence the people of that town made as little account of its only neighbor as was possible, and as little notice of its matters crept into their records and correspondence.

Later on, the additions were of a mixed class, non-conformists predominating, but neither party of sufficient power to wholly override the other. As a natural consequence, nothing of a disputed character would become a matter of record, and matters passed on without formal notice. When the Massachusetts Bay Colony came into power with the advent of Gov. Winthrop, in 1630, and a weight of governmental authority sufficient to subdue all public opposition, a new element was introduced into the little settlement of Wessagusset, the legal authority contending with the old spirit of resistance based upon the original grant to the Gorges Company upon which the settlement was founded.

The pressing necessities of the colonists incident upon a new settlement prevented open contention; but the spirit of oppo-

sition was there, and showed itself as opportunity offered. This state of things continued for several years, and it was not until a score had passed that the mixed company became fairly united and settled down into comparative peace. The original element long resisted, to the best of its ability, the growing power of the government, and hesitated to acknowledge its supremacy, hence the tardiness of many of its settlers to become freemen of the colony.

The large addition made to the settlement in 1635, by the company of Rev. Joseph Hull, and the rapid influx of other new members in the few years immediately succeeding, who were not mixed up with the previous, unsettled condition of things, instead of serving to allay the troubles, seemed but to introduce, for a time at least, new elements of discord which rose at times to public disturbance. But the strength of the civil power had become so great that these agitations showed themselves principally in the church and upon ecclesiastical matters.

The appearance of Rev. Mr. Hull, an actual minister, of Rev. Mr. Jenner, of Rev. Mr. Lenthal, in course of a year or two, and of Rev. Mr. Newman shortly after, each with a body of adherents strong enough to make formidable headway, and with vitality sufficient to endure for several years, affords ample evidence of the actual state of affairs. It will not be a matter of surprise that under such circumstances the records of the settlement should have been overlooked, neither party being willing that any statement besides its own should appear; hence, by tacit understanding, nothing was committed to writing.

The same reasons also prevailed in the Plymouth and Bay Colonies during the transition period to prevent permanent record by them. This settlement was a wedge between the two, acknowledging neither, and out of sympathy with both. Being without the bounds of the former, that colony could claim no jurisdiction, and in the case of the latter, a disputed authority rendered intercourse unpleasant. The fact also that there was in these Wessagusset people a strong Episcopalian element, served to render them for a time rather aliens than citizens.

With the large body of new settlers about 1640, the gradual

withdrawal of the leaders of the various conflicting elements, and the evident necessity for a strong government and combined effort, comparative peace prevailed, and the plantation, now town of Weymouth, entered upon a second historical era which continued, with but few important interruptions, for a century and a half, during which time the agricultural resources of the town developed themselves, and the foundations were laid which have made it, under a transition from agriculture to manufactures, what it is at the present time.

Another difficulty in the way of compiling a history of the town is the total absence for the first hundred and more years of all church records. While other towns have these in a more or less perfect condition, Weymouth is wholly destitute of this important class of historical material. The disturbed and conflicting state of affairs during the first twenty years of the settlement has already been alluded to, and will fully account for the absence of records during that time, and until the settlement of Rev. Thomas Thacher; but why there should be none for the century following until the settlement of Rev. William Smith, it is not so easy to say.

It was the early custom, and one which is still continued in many of the smaller churches, for the minister to act as clerk, which, with the important position accorded to him as pastor, rendered him the sole custodian of all the records and papers of the church. Accountable to no one, he could enter what he pleased or nothing at all, and he could do this in either his public capacity or as a private individual. In very many instances the latter seems to have been the method, if any, and the papers passed among the private property of the ministers, and upon his removal or death went into other hands, and the church was left destitute. It may well be that this was the case with the First Church in Weymouth, and that among the papers of the four pastors who preceded Rev. Mr. Smith, could they be found, there would appear much of great value to the historian of Weymouth.

Still another difficulty in the way of the town historian is the paucity of private manuscripts in the hands of families. There are some, perhaps many, of these, and a few of them have seen the light, but it is probable that by far the larger and



more important portion still remains where they have lain for generations, in the attics and forgotten drawers of their owners. The demand for them has not yet been sufficiently loud to make their value apparent in the eye of those in whose custody they lie. It may be possible in the future to discover and make these available; until then the historian must be content with the other sources of information at his command.

During the half-century in which Rev. Mr. Smith was custodian of the records of the First Church, and following him, the near forty years of service in the same position of Rev. Mr. Norton, very little indeed appears to have been made a matter of record by them excepting cases of discipline, and but few of those, while a very imperfect list of the marriages, births, and deaths has been preserved. Nearly the same may be said relative to the records of the Second Church in the South Parish during the first century (lacking only four years) of its existence, when the pastorate and clerkship were in the hands of Rev. Messrs. Bayley and Williams. The value of a record of passing events for the use of future generations does not seem to have been apparent to them, and, in consequence, theirs, upon general matters, is exceedingly brief.

With the death of Mr. Williams and the removal of Mr. Norton, the records reached a period within the memory of a generation now living, and it is, therefore, possible to repair any or many deficiencies that may have occurred in those of subsequent years. Thus, some of the principal difficulties that lie in the path of the town historian have been indicated, and the reasons suggested why such a work as his must necessarily be slow and often unsatisfactory.

It is, on the other hand, a matter of congratulation that the town records, embracing a period of more than two hundred and forty years, are so full and so well preserved. These are the main authority for the general history of the town during that time, and they have been carefully examined for the present sketch. Probably few towns are more fortunate in this particular than Weymouth. The dated record begins in December, 1641, although there are a very few items, evidently of an earlier date, which are undoubtedly transcribed from other sources by a later hand, and a mass of property records which

are undated, but which, from external and internal evidence, should appear a year or two later.

These early records contain a vast amount of detail with regard to town and parish matters, and were probably put in their present place and form under a town vote at the spring meeting of 1670. No book or paper in possession of the town at an earlier period is to be found at the present time. Until 1651 the records seem to have been kept by the townsmen, or selectmen, as since called; but at that time a town clerk was chosen, who, with his successors, occupied the position until to-day, and their many duties have been performed with a fair degree of fulness and accuracy. There have been periods when, in consequence of war or other prominent disturbances, many omissions occurred, but this was common in nearly all towns, and Weymouth is no worse off in this respect than its neighbors.

Besides the town records there are the old colonial records and the governmental records of later date, the archives of the State in the State House at Boston, and the court records; all of these are of great value, and have been freely consulted in the preparation of the present work. Then, too, there are the papers of contemporaneous writers during the various periods covered by the history, and, particularly, the valuable documents and reprints of the Massachusetts Historical, and the New England Historic, Genealogical Societies, which are mines of wealth to the local as well as to the general historian. These have all been freely opened to the use of the compiler, and they have been carefully examined, although not so thoroughly as would be desirable and necessary for a complete history; but the ground has been covered, and it is believed that the more important facts connected with the story of Weymouth are here presented.

The sketches of the various churches and religious societies have been compiled from authentic sources, in most cases from their own records, while the facts concerning the industrial and financial interests have been carefully gathered from materials furnished by officers of the corporations or by persons engaged in the various branches of business now carried on in the town, and are as complete as can be expected in a work of this limited extent.

The records of the soldiers engaged in the various wars of the country from the Pequod to the Revolution, although not by any means full or perfect, are believed to be much more complete than any heretofore furnished, and have been gathered from all the known sources at command, the list of the Revolutionary soldiers being taken mainly from the records of the town treasurer at the time, the volume in which they are found having been quite recently brought to the notice of the public. Valuable information has also been found among the papers of the late Col. Thomas Vinson of South Weymouth, and others who participated in that war.

The first publication of the Weymouth Historical Society has been freely drawn upon for matters covered in that volume, including the time of the French and Indian, and Revolutionary wars. This publication also contains many important facts concerning local history from the date of the arrival of the company of Rev. Joseph Hull in 1635.

The history of Weymouth during the Rebellion of 1861 to 1865 is so recent that the main facts are fresh in the memories of all; and as a full record of the events of that war in which the town has special interest will undoubtedly be published, it has not been deemed desirable to furnish in this sketch anything beyond as complete a list of the men sent into the service from the town, with such brief information concerning their rank, branch of service, and casualties, as could be obtained in the limited time allowed for the preparation of the work. These have been obtained principally from the official records of the town, and are in the main correct, although there are, doubtless, many errors unavoidable in a list containing so many names, — a fact which will be readily admitted by all who have had experience in this kind of work.

One fact remains to be noticed, which is, that the sketch, although published by the town committee, is done under the auspices of the Weymouth Historical Society, for the reason that this association has been for the past five years actively engaged in gathering material for this very purpose, much of which has been used in the preparation of this work. It has also published one work upon local town history, and it has been thought wise to make this a second number of that series,

the first having passed into all of the prominent libraries of the land and become well and favorably known; and further, that all of the collections of the society have been placed at the service of the committee at no expense to the town, and its members are citizens deeply interested and actively engaged in all matters connected with town history; and also that while this plan of publication will be of no loss to the town, it will be of great service to the society.

Here, then, are the reasons for the publication of this work in its present form, and a statement of some of the difficulties to be met and overcome in its preparation; and also an attempt to give to the citizens a glimpse of the wealth of history belonging to them, and which they may some day hope to inherit in its fulness, if they will do their work in its development.