

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

NORTH WORCESTER

Its First Settlers and Old Farms, an Historical
Address, Delivered Before the Chamberlain
District Farmers Club



by
Caleb A. Wall

Forgotten Books



NORTH WORCESTER

**Its First Settlers and Old Farms, an
Historical Address, Delivered Before
the Chamberlain District Farmers Club**

by

Caleb A. Wall

Published by Forgotten Books 2013

Originally published 1890

PIBN 1000821149

www.ForgottenBooks.org

Copyright © 2013 Forgotten Books

Forgotten Books

eBook Terms & Conditions

www.forgottenbooks.org

1. This eBook* may be

- a. Distributed without modification or sale.
- b. Copied for personal and educational use.
- c. Printed for personal and educational use.

2. This eBook* may NOT be

- a. Sold individually or as part of a package.
 - b. Modified in any way.
 - c. Reversed-engineered.



This eBook* and all its content including images are
Copyright © 2014 FB &c Ltd - All rights reserved.
Forgotten Books is a registered trademark of FB &c Ltd.

FB &c Ltd, Dalton House, 60 Windsor Avenue, London SW19 2RR
Company number 08720141. Registered in England and Wales.

*eBook' refers to this PDF and any of its content including pages and images in either electronic or printed form.

The paperback edition of
this book can be purchased from

amazon.com

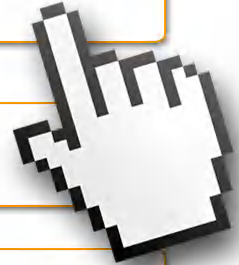
amazon.co.uk

amazon.de

amazon.fr

amazon.es

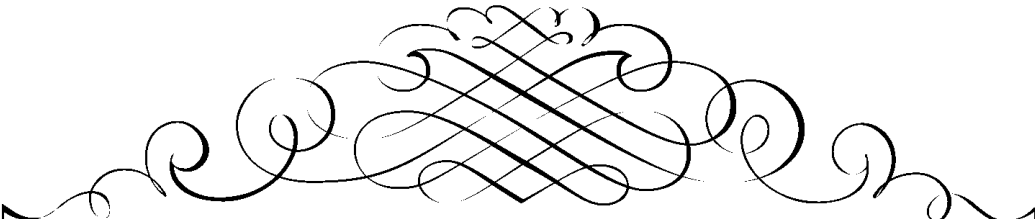
amazon.it



Over 1,000,000 eBooks
are available to read at

Forgotten Books

www.forgottenbooks.org



484,473 eBooks
are available to read at

Forgotten Books

www.ForgottenBooks.org



Alchemy

“In changing the base metals into gold and silver by the projection of the Stone, it follows (by an accelerated process) the method of nature, and therefore is natural.”

The New Pearl of Great Price, by Peter Bonus, 1338 AD

www.ForgottenBooks.org/Alchemy



Forgotten Books

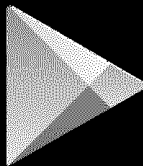
Free App Download



Available on the
App Store



Windows
Store



ANDROID APP ON

Google™ play

Enjoy

484,473 Books

wherever you go

www.ForgottenBooks.org/apps



NORTH WORCESTER:

ITS FIRST SETTLERS

AND

OLD FARMS.

AN HISTORICAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE CHAMBERLAIN DISTRICT FARMERS'
CLUB, AT THE RESIDENCE OF A. S. LOWELL,
NORTH WORCESTER, DEC. 6, 1889.

By CALEB A. WALL,

Author of "REMINISCENCES OF WORCESTER," "PURITANS VS. THE QUAKERS," Etc.

WORCESTER:
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

1890.

LOAN STACK

This is the first of a series of similar publications which the author is about to issue, containing his addresses at different historic points in the territory of Worcester, comprising accounts of the first settlers and their families, historical and genealogical, the location of their estates, etc. Those to follow will include the address at Lake Park, June 15, 1889, giving an account of the earliest settlers west of Lake Quinsigamond; the address on Pakachoag Hill, July 13; and others to be given in different sections of this city, including Sagatabscot Hill, Quinsigamond Village, Tatnuck, etc., relating to their respective localities in the past. The whole, bound together, will constitute a sequel or second volume to my "Reminiscences of Worcester," published in 1877.

C. A. W.

January 1, 1890.

[PRESS OF F. S. BLANCHARD & CO.]

NORTH WORCESTER: ^{E, JIN 12 MAIN}

ITS FIRST SETTLERS AND OLD FARMS.

There was a gathering of unusual local historical interest at the residence of A. S. Lowell, North Worcester, Friday evening, December 6, 1889, held under the auspices of the Chamberlain District Farmers' Club, by invitation of Mr. Lowell, to hear an address by Caleb A. Wall, on the history of the first settlers and old farms in that locality.

Near the railroad station here are two ancient square built mansions of similar construction, erected for two brothers by their father, the history of which, and of the farms to which they belong, dates back to the beginning of the town.

One of these old estates, that on Brattle Street, north-east of the depot, has been owned and occupied about two years by Mr. Lowell, who has tastefully refitted the old mansion, while preserving its ancient architectural features; the other of these two old estates is that owned and occupied by the family of the late J. L. Libby, just south of the depot, on the east side of Holden Street, the ancient house on which, also, preserves very much the same architectural appearance as it possessed long anterior to the days of our revolutionary sires.

At Friday evening's meeting at Mr. Lowell's, besides members of the Club, whose territory includes this section, numerous others interested in such matters were present, including many of our prominent citizens. The evening was an unusually pleasant one, with a clear sky overhead, and a full moon shining brightly, adding greatly to the delightfulness of the occasion. A party of nearly one hundred assembled at about seven o'clock,

and after a social half hour, were called to order in the spacious parlors by P. F. Sears, Vice-President of the Club, the President, Pliny Moore, coming later. At 7.30 p. m. Mr. Wall was introduced, and gave his address, as follows:

CALEB A. WALL'S ADDRESS.

One of the earliest proprietors of Worcester, at the beginning of its permanent settlement, after the close of Queen Anne's War, so called, in 1713, was James Knapp, or Knopp, as sometimes written on the old records. He came here from Newton, where he was born February 4, 1691. He had a grant of 250 acres of land including the spot where we now are. It took in, besides the fine farm of our excellent host, the adjoining and surrounding estates of James E. Fuller, C. C. Foster, Mrs. Libby, Mrs. Allen, John McTammany, Charles P. Geeser, and others. This was a century and three-quarters ago, when Worcester was resettled after the previous devastation by the Indians,* lots then beginning to be taken up as granted by the Committee of the General Court to the first settlers at different points within the original territory of Worcester, which included, besides what is now Worcester, the present territory of Holden,† and the north east quarter of Auburn.‡

Before speaking further of this land of Knapp, and its subsequent conveyance to and division among other parties, it is proper to say something about him. He was the second son of John, Jr., and Sarah (Parks) Knapp of Newton, his father being the eldest son of John, Sr., and Sarah (Young) Knapp of Watertown. John Knapp, Sr., born in England in 1624, was a carpenter, son of William Knapp, also a carpenter, a proprietor of Watertown in 1636-7, who came over from England with his sons, William, Jr., John and James, in 1630.

James Knapp, the original proprietor of the lands in this vicinity, was thus great-grandson of the emigrant ancestor, William Knapp. He married, first, April 2,

* See "Reminiscences of Worcester," pages 12-17.

† Ibid, pages 128-30.

1714, Elizabeth Bond, daughter of Dea. William, Jr. and Hepsibah (Hastings) Bond of Watertown, by whom he had a son Jonathan, born October 23, 1714, and after her death January 12, 1716, he married, October 10, 1716, Mary Fisk, sister of the wife of Benjamin Flagg,* an original settler of Worcester, some of whose lands here were in the vicinity of his own, and Knapp then came here, where his next five children were born, as follows: Abijah, October 2, 1717; Mary, December 16, 1719; Benjamin, August 31, 1721; James, Jr., October 27, 1723; and Elisha, December 6, 1725. James Knapp then sold out all his estate in Worcester and moved away. Among his subsequent children, born probably in Watertown, were Elizabeth, born May 15, 1729, and John, born October 31, 1731. Of those children, Abijah went to Marlborough, where he married in 1744, Abigail Ward; he was in Marlborough in 1762, and went thence to Petersham and afterwards to Athol. James, Jr., went to Medway. and thence, in 1773, to Sturbridge, where he was in 1797. John went from Worcester in 1759 to Petersham, and thence in 1785 to Spencer. Benjamin was in Sturbridge in 1744.

James Knapp, the father, was chosen surveyor of highways at the first annual March town meeting in Worcester, and he had a seat granted him in the second of the sixth section of seats at the first regular or official assignment of seats in the first meeting house on the old Common in 1724. Besides the 250 acres of land in this vicinity, James Knapp had a grant of land November 22, 1718, by order of the General Court's Committee, of "75 acres for a second division with three acres allowance for a highway four rods wide running through it, this land lying on the north side of his house lot, and on the east side of Mill Brook." This would indicate that James Knapp did not build or settle on any part of his 250 acres in this vicinity, but on the lot granted to him just south of the above-mentioned 75 acres granted to him in 1718. The location of this was near to and included the site of the present residence of Edwin P. Curtis on Burn-

* See "Reminiscences," pages 106-8.

coat Street. This estate, then comprising 90 acres, and including all the estate James Knapp then owned in Worcester, Knapp sold, March 7, 1726, to Thomas Gleason, from Shrewsbury, and previously of Sudbury, ancestor of the race of Gleasons afterwards so numerous in the northern section of the town, of whom I shall have more to say at the proper time. This Thomas Gleason, who filled at different times the positions of constable, highway surveyor, and tythingman, lived on that spot till his decease in 1756, leaving a large family of sons and daughters, this estate, to which his son Isaac succeeded, passing out of the family over 75 years ago, before Mrs. Curtis's grandfather, Walter Bigelow, senior, purchased it.*

Richard Temple, born in Concord, in 1674, and a resident of Shrewsbury from 1724 to 1738, when he went back to Concord, was the purchaser, before 1725, from James Knapp, of the 250 acres above mentioned. He made the purchase for his two sons, Joseph and William Temple, and a son-in-law, William Harris, among whom he divided it. Two of these being housewrights by trade and the other a surveyor, they probably erected the first houses upon it, two of which are still standing, substantial as well as venerable specimens of ancient architecture, in one of which we are now assembled. September 1, 1730, Richard Temple, then a resident of Shrewsbury, "for love and good will, and his advancement in the world," etc., conveyed to his son Joseph Temple, 65 acres of land, "part of the 250 acres which the said Joseph Temple purchased of James Knapp, and bounded on the south by that part of the 250 acres which his son William Temple lived on, and on the west by that part which the son-in-law lived on." At the same time he deeded to his daughter Mary, wife of William Harris, housewright, 50 acres, another part of the said 250 acres, "for love and good will," etc.; and January 23, 1735, he deeded to his son William Temple, housewright, 65 acres of land, another part of said 250 acres, south of that occupied by Joseph, for the same consideration of "love

* See "Reminiscences," page 45.

and good will," etc. This would show that these ancient houses were then here. Joseph Temple's portion included the spot where we now are, and this is the house he built and lived in. The ancient house south of this, on Holden Street, and similar to this in construction, where the family of the late J. L. Libby now live, was the residence of William Temple, which he built. The estate of William Harris was westerly of Joseph Temple's, and north-westerly of William Temple's, the ancient house in which several generations of that family lived having long since disappeared.

This Richard Temple was a son of Abraham and grandson of the original emigrants, Richard and Joanna Temple, who were of Salem in 1648, and afterwards of Concord. Neither of the Temple brothers remained during their lifetime upon the estates thus given them by their father.

Among the town offices filled by Joseph Temple was that of field driver in 1740, hogreeve in '41, surveyor of highways and juryman in '42, and constable in '52. His brother, William Temple, was surveyor of highways in 1736, and field driver in 1739, and in the assignment of seats in the first meeting house on the old Common in 1733, as described in my "Reminiscences of Worcester," pages 113 and 114, he occupied a seat in "ye second section in ye foremost gallery." William Harris was surveyor of highways in 1737, '38 and '41; and hogreeve in 1732, '33, '39, '42, '43, and '44; and he occupied a seat in "ye second section in ye long gallery," in that old meeting house. Robert Peables, whose estate the first Elisha Smith purchased and resided upon, west of North Pond, was assigned a seat in this first meeting house, "in ye second section in ye body," as will be seen by the description and plan referred to.

Joseph Temple sold out his 65 acres (including where we now are) May 1, 1772, for £292, 6s. and 8d., to Levi Houghton of Ashby, who lived here ten years. William Temple sold out his estate, including the original portion of the Libby estate south of us, March 22, 1740, for £510, to Elisha Smith, from Waltham, the first one of four

generations of that name who have lived on different portions of that estate or the immediate vicinity, of whom more will be said later. William and Mary (Temple) Harris's descendants also remained on their ancestral estate, or on different portions of it, west of us, for several generations, an account of whom now would swell this address to too great a length.

Levi Houghton sold, November 15, 1782, for £650, 93 1-2 acres, including the above 65 acres bought of Joseph Temple, to Josiah Lyon, yeoman, of Worcester, and the latter sold March 18, 1791 for £475, 88 1-2 acres of this, in two tracts, including the 65 acres where we are, to Simeon Fish, yeoman, from Mendon, and Mr. Fish sold the same April 10, 1795, to Francis Thaxter of Hingham, who conveyed it April 13, 1796, to Benjamin Farrar of Abington, and the latter sold the same estate April 12, 1799, to Nathan Patch, a celebrated real estate owner and speculator of his time, who sold it September 22, 1800, to his son Joseph Patch. The next owner was Joseph Daniels from Sherborn, who purchased it of the Patches, November 18, 1807, for \$4000. Joseph Daniels's wife, Thankful, was daughter of James Penniman of Medway, and sister of Abigail, wife of the first Samuel Damon of Holden. Joseph Daniels died about 1820, leaving his estate to his son Joseph Daniels, Jr., who married Eliza Glazier, daughter of Calvin and Eliza (Pierce) Glazier of Rutland. Joseph, Jr., and Eliza were parents of Mrs. Lewis Thayer, now residing at No. 142 Lincoln Street; of Mrs. John Mason, now residing at No. 9 John Street; of the wife of the late Loison D. Towne, formerly residing at No. 10 Harvard Street; and of the late Joseph D. Daniels, whose widow resides at No. 18 Harvard Street. Joseph Daniels, Jr., carried on the farm for several years, till the estate, under his improvident management, passed through a heavy mortgage, about 1831, into the hands of his cousin, the late Col. Samuel Damon of Holden, son of the first Samuel Damon, the mortgage being subject to the right of dower of Thankful Daniels, the widow of Joseph Daniels, Sr. The farm was managed for two years, from 1831 to

1833, by Robert S. Gleason, whose wife was a daughter of Daniel Davis, the latter's wife being a daughter of Francis Daniels, brother of Joseph, Sr. October 1, 1833, Col. Damon, for the sum of \$3500, conveyed the estate, then comprising 152 acres, to Robert S. Gleason and Ezekiel Newton, the latter having for two years previous worked for Mr. Gleason on the farm. They managed the estate together for six years, till April 15, 1839, when the widow, Thankful Gleason, sold out to them her right of dower and interest in the estate, where she had resided for thirty years, and went to reside with her grand daughter, Mrs. Robert S. Gleason, on Ararat Street; Mr. Gleason, at the same time, disposing of his half of the estate to Charles Newton, a brother of Ezekiel, and these two brothers then managed the old farm together for six years, both residing with their respective families in this house, in which both held their honeymoon receptions at their marriage, Ezekiel in 1835 and Charles in 1842, after coming here. The elder of these two brothers, our respected veteran friend, Ezekiel Newton, at my right, hale and hearty in his 78th year, we are all happy to greet with us to-night, from his new home in Westborough; also a younger surviving brother, at my left, Abraham H. Newton, who can give many pleasant recollections of his boyhood here.

About 1846, the old farm was divided, Ezekiel Newton taking the northern half, and Charles the southern half extending to Ararat Street, on which latter half Charles Newton built the house now occupied by architect James E. Fuller; the preceding owner of this half, which has had many owners since Charles Newton sold it, about 1861, being our friend C. C. Foster. Ezekiel Newton owned and occupied the northern half of this original estate, including the house we are in, till 1870, when, after residing here thirty-nine years, he sold it to the late Charles H. Geeser, who owned and occupied it till his decease, and after him his son, the present Charles P. Geeser, who sold it in 1884 to Walter S. Bugbee, now of Shrewsbury; and the latter sold it in 1887 to the present owner and occupant, our generous host. When Mr.

Geeser sold out here, he built his present residence just across the road. When Joseph Daniels, Jr., lived here, he kept a store in this house for many years, where he was a licensed retailer of intoxicating drinks, in accordance with an old custom, unfortunately, not yet extinct in too many places, though long since extinguished from this locality; and it is ardently hoped, since the glorious result of the recent vote on the question by our citizens, that the whole city may be redeemed from the terrible curse.

The widow, Thankful Daniels, after removing from her old homestead here, in 1840, resided with her grand daughter, Mrs. Robert S. Gleason, on Ararat Street, where she died January 10, 1852, aged 93 years, 7 months and 4 days, and was buried in Rural Cemetery. Eliza G. Daniels, widow of Joseph Daniels, Jr., died January 28, 1861, aged 71 years and 7 months, at the residence of her son, the late Joseph D. Daniels, on Harvard Street.

Richard¹ Newton, progenitor of the Newtons in New England, came from England and was one of the first settlers in Sudbury in 1640, and one of the petitioners for Marlborough, where he settled in 1660, in the southern part afterwards set off for Southborough, where and in Westborough and Shrewsbury, he has descendants. He died at the old homestead in Southborough, August 24, 1701, aged 100 years. His son Moses,² born in 1646, married in 1768 Joanna Larkin, and had in Southborough, Moses,³ Jr., born in 1669, who married in 1695, Sarah Howe, and their three sons, Aaron,⁴ Elisha,⁴ and Ezekiel,⁴ were among the first settlers in Shrewsbury, where they had numerous descendants. Elisha⁴ married in 1728, Sarah Tomlin of Westborough, and had in Shrewsbury twelve children, of whom the sixth son and eighth child was Charles,⁵ born August 28, 1742, who married in 1765, Tabitha Bowker of Westborough, and had in Shrewsbury five children, of whom Ezra⁶, born November 22, 1774, married January 28, 1812, Lucy Howe of Princeton, and settled there, they being parents of the above mentioned Ezekiel, Charles, and Abraham H. New-

ton. The father died with his oldest son Ezekiel, in this house, April 10, 1863, while the youngest son Abraham H. was a soldier in the Union Army, in company F, 51st regiment, and not, as the minister said at his father's funeral, "a wanderer up and down the earth." Charles died about two years ago, in Millbury, and the other surviving brother, Ezra, Jr., has been a resident of the far west for some thirty years.

Elisha Smith, who bought in 1740 the estate of William Temple, including the Libby house and the original 60 acres of that estate, was son of Jonathan and Jane (Peabody) Smith of Watertown, where he was born January 11, 1692. Jonathan, born in 1659, was son of Thomas Smith, who came to America in the summer of 1635, then aged 35, and settled in Watertown, where he died, March 10, 1693, aged 93. He was admitted freeman of the Massachusetts colony, May 17, 1637. He married Mary, daughter of William Knapp, before referred to, by whom he had nine children, born between 1637 and 1662, of whom Jonathan, born in 1659, was father of Elisha. Elisha Smith thus bore the blood relationship of second cousin to the original proprietor of this land, James Knapp, both being grandsons of William Knapp. This relationship may have led to the Smiths coming here. Elisha Smith married, March 25, 1713, Patience Brown, daughter of Captain Abraham and Mary (Hyde) Brown, of that part of old Watertown, afterwards Waltham, and they had there these six children: First, Jonathan, born January 23, 1715, who married November 8, 1736, Susanna Stearns, daughter of Isaac and Mary (Bemis) Stearns of Waltham, and sister of Nathaniel Stearns of Holden. Jonathan and Susanna settled in Lunenburg on 100 acres of land there, given him by his father, where they had Reuben, Simon, Mary, and Patience, of whom the latter married a Stiles, and Jonathan died before his father.

Elisha Smith's second child, Patience, born February 23, 1717, married December 6, 1733, Abraham Sander-son, who was born in Watertown, March 28, 1711, and they also settled in Lunenburg, on seventy acres of land

given them by her father, on the northern border of the town, adjoining Townsend, where Abraham and Patience had thirteen children, of whom the fourth one was Jacob Sanderson, a minute man of the revolution, at the battle of Bennington, who married in Worcester in 1760, Elizabeth Child, and settled in Lunenburg on 400 acres of land he purchased east of his father. The homestead farm of the first Abraham Sanderson in Lunenburg is still in the family, being owned and occupied by his great-grandson, Richard Gilchrist, in the original gable roofed house, to which many pilgrimages are made by descendants of the original settler. The grave of this venerable ancestor is marked by a headstone of slate in the old cemetery in Lunenburg, inscribed "Abraham Sanderson, died December 4, 1776, aged 86." His wife Patience lies by his side. Abraham was the second of five children of Samuel and Mercy (Gale) Sanderson of Watertown, grandson of Dea. Jonathan and Abiah (Bartlett) Sanderson, and great-grandson of the original settlers, Edward and Mary (Eggleston) Sanderson of Watertown. The name of this family was frequently written in the old records Sanders, and Saunders.

Among the numerous descendants of the Jacob Sanderson above mentioned, is his great-grandson, our esteemed fellow citizen, present with us to-night, Rev. Alonzo Sanderson, pastor of Laurel Street church, whose father, Jesse Sanderson, is still living in Lunenburg, hale and hearty at 86.

The third child of Elisha and Patience (Brown) Smith was Elisha Smith, Jr., born June 4, 1719, who married Susanna Gleason, born in 1722, the oldest of eleven children of Thomas Gleason of Worcester, before mentioned. Elisha, Jr., and Susanna, settled on the estate which his father, Elisha Smith, Sr., bought in 1740 of William Temple; while the father settled on another estate of 140 acres south of it and west of and adjoining North Pond, which he purchased the year previous, February 8, 1739, of Richard Peables, another extensive original proprietor of land in this part of Worcester. This purchase of 140 acres included the farms now of R. J. Pierce, Eben and W. C. Jewett, and others.

Of the other children of Elisha, Sr., and Patience (Brown) Smith, Isaac settled on 87 acres of land given him by his father in the south east part of Holden, and Eunice was wife of Isaac Gleason, who resided where his father, Thomas Gleason, before spoken of, lived, on Burncoat Street, where Edwin P. Curtis now lives. By a second wife, Abigail, whom he married in 1730, Elisha Smith, Sr., had five other children, of whom Abraham settled on 120 acres of land given him by his father in Lunenburg, and Robert, born in Waltham in 1737, two years before the father came to Worcester, settled on the paternal homestead given him by the father at his decease in 1765, west of the pond, including the land where R. J. Pierce and E. and W. C. Jewett now live. This old estate, then comprising 252 acres, Robert Smith sold in 1776 to Asa Ward, father of the former Register of Deeds, Artemas Ward. Robert Smith then removed to his last residence on Ararat Street, where his son-in-law, Jonathan Gleason, Jr., and the latter's sons, Robert S.* and Benjamin F. Gleason afterwards lived, the main part of that estate having been for many years owned and occupied by C. B. Sweetser, and a portion of it by the family of the late Benjamin F. Gleason, who died February 16, 1869, aged 53; his father Jonathan Gleason, Jr., died May 3, 1838, aged 66; and the latter's widow, Esther, daughter of Robert Smith, died December 31, 1866,

* Robert S. Gleason sold out his interest on Ararat street to his brother Benjamin F. in 1855, and removed his residence to Beach street, and afterwards to Washington street, where he died in 1870, and his widow lived there after him. Their grandfather, Jonathan Gleason, Sr., father of Jonathan Jr., was the oldest of ten children of the above mentioned Isaac Gleason, who died in 1777, several of whose children settled on different portions of the extensive landed estates of their father, Isaac Gleason, on both sides of Burncoat street. Jonathan Gleason, Sr., lived in the ancient house still standing on the west side of West Boylston street in Northville, now owned by Joseph Stone, and his son, Jonathan, Jr., was the oldest of his eleven children. They are descendants of Thomas Gleason, from the old country, admitted freeman of the Massachusetts Colony in 1652, who settled first in Watertown, was of Cambridge early as 1657, of Charlestown in 1662, and afterwards in Cambridge, where he died in 1684. He was great-grandfather of the first Thomas Gleason of Worcester, above mentioned. A fuller genealogy of these and other old Worcester families will form subjects of future essays or addresses of this series.

aged 95, at the residence of her daughter on Ararat Street.

Robert Smith had two sons and seven daughters: 1, David, resided on 21 acres of land given him by the father, in Holden; 2, Amos, married a Winn and resided on a farm in Holden, also given him by the father; 3, Abigail, married in 1780, Benjamin Rice of Barre and had six children there; 4, Lydia, married Daniel Ball; 5, Sarah, married in 1786 Samuel Bixby of Barre; 6, Ruth, married Aaron Parker of Holden, grandfather of Charles E. Parker, present here to-night; 7, Esther, married Jonathan Gleason, Jr., and succeeded to the paternal estate on Ararat Street, as before mentioned; 8, Hannah, married Josiah Flagg, and had Jonathan, Joel, and others; 9, another daughter married a Ward. Seven of these children were by Robert Smith's first wife Sarah, who died February 21, 1766, aged 33, and the last two were by his second wife, Elizabeth Goodale, sister of Paul Goodale, Sr., of West Boylston. Robert Smith died July 4, 1807, aged 70, at his last residence on Ararat Street, and his widow died there October 6, 1837, aged 96 years and 7 months. Robert and his brother, Elisha Smith, Jr., and their father, Elisha, Sr., had seats assigned them in the meeting house erected on the old Common in 1763, according to the plan printed in my "Reminiscences of Worcester," at page 113. Elisha, Sr., and his son Robert occupied the same slip or pew at the right of the pulpit, as will be noticed. Among other official positions, Robert Smith was selectman in 1778 and '79; his brother Elisha, Jr., was one of the building committee of the meeting house in 1763, one of the school committee in 1753, and surveyor of highways in 1744, with other town duties; and their father Elisha, Sr., was surveyor of highways of the town in 1740, '43, '46, '47, and '49; school committee in 1740, and '43; collector of taxes in 1747 and '49; and selectman and assessor in 1752.

Elisha Smith, Sr., married for his third and last wife, a widow, Sarah Melvin of Concord, August 12, 1741, two years after he came to Worcester. She survived him three years, leaving at her decease in 1768 four sons,

John, Ebenezer, Josiah, and Nathan Melvin, by a former husband, and also a daughter, Sarah, who married a Barnes. This first Elisha Smith was one of the most extensive landed proprietors of his time. Besides his homestead which he left to his son Robert, and the 60 acres he bought of William Temple, which he gave to his son Elisha, Jr., he owned by grant or purchase, several hundred acres of land in Worcester, Holden, and Lunenburg, on which he settled his different sons and sons-in-law, as before alluded to. The original house on the estate in which Elisha and his son Robert Smith lived, stood where E. and W. C. Jewett's house now stands, which latter was built about 1834, when the original house was torn down, by the late Benjamin Reed.

Elisha Smith, Jr., who married Susanna Gleason, resided where Mrs. Libby now lives, and had there four sons and nine daughters, born between 1741 and 1758, an account of whom and of the families of those who married would form an extensive chapter in itself, and must be deferred to some other time or occasion. The second son and third child, Elisha Smith, the third, born July 6, 1744, was a sea captain; he married, January 13, 1774, Persis Child, daughter of John Child, a hotel keeper, whose residence was a little over Worcester line, northerly of the Smiths and Harrises. Elisha Smith the third and Persis, who had ten children, resided on the estate given him by his father, where C. C. Foster now lives, and where his son, Elisha Smith the fourth, who married Betsy Howe of Holden, afterwards lived and died; the third Elisha Smith died there in 1806, aged 60, and his son the fourth Elisha, September 22, 1850, aged 76; a nephew of the latter, the late Walter H. Davis, who took care of his uncle in his last days, afterwards owning and occupying that estate, which has since had many different owners and occupants.

Daniel Smith, who died in 1856, aged 81, was a brother of the fourth Elisha, and resided in the brick building in the rear on that portion of the parental estate which he inherited from the father.

The homestead estate of the second Elisha Smith,

where Mrs. Libby lives, passed out of the family after his decease, to Benjamin Thaxter of Abington, whose title to it, then comprising 105 acres, bears date November 27, 1792. Since then the estate has been best known as the Thaxter Place, although the Thaxters owned it only about 35 years. Benjamin Thaxter died there April 21, 1821, aged 63, and his widow and son Francis lived there after him till the estate passed out of the family about 1828.* The next owner and occupant was Thomas A. Aldrich, from Rhode Island, who sold it in 1849 to the late Dea. Alpheus Merrifield, the latter purchasing it for his son, the late Francis N. Merrifield, who lived there, and sold it about 1866 to the late James L. Libby, and the latter's family still own and occupy it.

Asa Ward, who purchased in 1776 of Robert Smith, the homestead estate of his father, the first Elisha Smith, west of North Pond, sold the same in 1781 to Dea. Ebenezer Reed, from Uxbridge, who resided on that portion of it where R. J. Pierce now lives, till his death May, 11, 1823, aged 81 years, and his son Samuel T. Reed lived there after him till his death, April 21, 1832, aged 58, the latter's brother, the late Benjamin Reed, taking that portion of the original estate afterwards purchased by the late Ebenezer Jewett, father of the present Eben Jewett, who now resides thereon with his son, Warren C. Jewett. That portion of the original estate where the late Samuel T. Reed lived and where R.

* Benjamin Thaxter was a native of Hingham, and brother, probably, of the Francis Thaxter who owned the Daniels place awhile. Benjamin Thaxter married, before he came to Worcester, Sarah Howe, of Abington, and they had these six children: 1, Sarah, born in 1786, married, August 30, 1815, Joseph Avery of Plymouth, son of Rev. Joseph Avery, pastor of the old church in Holden, from 1774 till his death in 1824, aged 72 years; 2, Benjamin, Jr., born in 1788, died September 6, 1886, in Boston, aged 98; 3, Mary H., born in 1793, married, July 12, 1826, Henry Wheeler, son of Theophilus Wheeler, Register of Probate from 1793 to 1836, and she died November 19, 1874, aged 81, at the old Wheeler homestead on Main Street, where her husband and his father and grandfather had lived, and where also her sister, Mrs. Avery, died February 17, 1873, aged 87; 4, Francis, succeeded his father on the old Thaxter estate at North Worcester, and died unmarried, September 14, 1851, aged 54 years, at the residence of his sister, Mrs. Henry Wheeler; 5, Martin H., died September 21, 1826, aged 43, in Florida; 6, Fanny L., died August 31, 1859, aged 68, unmarried, at her sister's Mrs. Henry Wheeler. See "Reminiscences of Worcester," page 257.

Sorry, this page is
unavailable to Free Members

You may continue reading on the following page



Upgrade your
Forgotten Books Membership
to view this page now
with our
7 DAY FREE TRIAL

[Start Free Trial](#)

ging away at their work, with their old fashioned implements of husbandry, as they followed their humble callings, for the maintenance of themselves and those near and dear to them by the same family ties which bind us to those now depending upon us for support. We may well say of these veteran farmers of the olden time on these hills and along these valleys: They now rest from their labors in their long, last sleep:

“They have plowed their last furrow and reaped their last grain,
No morn shall awake them to labor again.”

“Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow, oft, the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their teams afield,
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw built shed,
The cock’s shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy house-wife ply her evening care;
No children run to lisp their sire’s return,
Or climb his knees, the envied kiss to share.”

As we contemplate in imagination these former tillers of the soil, with their past time simple modes of husbandry, in striking contrast with our modern improved methods of farming by the application of machinery and multiplied means of fertilization, making so many blades of grass and so many ears of corn and kernels of grain grow where but one could formerly be produced; as we take into consideration our modern, vastly multiplied facilities for farming, over the past, how forcibly are we reminded of the obligation and responsibility of the present cultivators of the soil to “make farming pay” to a much greater extent than did our predecessors with so much less favorable facilities at their command. If our patriotic old forefathers, whom we are in the habit of so justly commending for their stern virtues of industry and perseverance, could secure for themselves and their families a comfortable and substantial living, educate their children, and hand down their names to us as good examples for us to follow, how impressively comes to us the sense of obligation and duty for the

intelligent farmers of this model old agricultural county of Worcester, with their immensely increased facilities, to set themselves in the foreground as successful practitioners of the noble art of husbandry, making it pay financially as well at least as any other honest business calling in our midst.

Two hundred and sixty-nine years ago this very day, the Mayflower, with its precious load of Pilgrims, had arrived in Massachusetts Bay, and was seeking a safe landing place, which they found a few days later on Plymouth Rock. For what did they come here, except to enjoy the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and maintain an honest subsistence for all by the cultivation of the land which they were careful to secure a right to by equitable purchase from the Indians, as well as grants from the mother country? They did not come here to huddle together in a few large communities, where the privileged few might enrich themselves at the expense and sacrifice of the labors of the great multitude of "hewers of wood and drawers of water;" where concentrated capital might lord it over the toiling millions in compact and densely crowded cities. On the contrary, they came here to spread out over the land. When one little community of proprietors after another, which they called towns, miles and miles apart, had become no larger in population than your little village of North Worcester, they gradually pushed out farther and farther into the country for more room, founding Worcester in due time in their westward progress from the sea shore.

Had there been a wider spread over the land, and less extension up into the air, in the erection of the many-storied structures in our large cities, and had the streets upon which they were built been wider instead of so narrow as they are, in violation of the laws of nature, might not some of the big fires we have been pained to read the details of, been prevented? "The mills of God," it is said, "grind slowly," but they grind sure, and it is hoped that wiser action in the future, on the part of those most responsible for the present state of things in this regard, may be induced from the sad lessons of the past.

I would not be understood, of course, as claiming that there should be no cities or large towns, or that the size of organized civil communities should be limited by any arbitrary mathematical rule,—the regular laws of business and trade, if left to operate legitimately, would settle this matter properly,—but I do claim that inordinate selfishness, a one-sided, misguided view of things, has crept in and pushed matters in this line out of all due proportion, between an honest demand and supply, as to actual need and benefit, for the public interest, in the extreme modern rush of the rural population into the cities, leaving the old farms, with all their ancestral associations, to go to ruin. Had the 95 per cent of those who, within my own recollection, have become bankrupt in their attempt to run mercantile business in Worcester, remained upon the farm, and cultivated that as they ought, they might have made a successful thing of it, instead of running behind; they might not have become millionaires, but they certainly would not have been so far behindhand, pecuniarily, as too many of such adventurous ones have become, and been obliged to resort to the statutes of the commonwealth in order to get again upon their feet, and become again *legally* (quite a different thing from *morally*) square with the world.

All honor to those of our time who have set noble examples in turning attention to the farm in the midst of their other avocations. Among these is our estimable and enterprising host, one of the five per cent who have made a success in their mercantile business, as contradistinguished from the unfortunate 95 per cent who have made a wreck of it.

Let this rejuvenation of the old farms in New England go forward, till, in our travels through the country towns, we shall see, instead of dilapidated homesteads of former successful tillers of the soil, from the windows of which the owl may almost be said to look out at noonday upon the decay of a former civilization, we may witness the homes of prosperous farmers, with their “cattle upon a thousand hills,” the landscape interspersed with little mill villages along the many streams and waterfalls, while at

a distance an enterprising city like our own Worcester, reaching its proud proportions on the basis of a natural growth, on the principles of equity and justice, as the grand central mart of trade and business for this section of the country, looms up grandly to view, with its 85,000 inhabitants and huge manufacturing establishments, its innumerable churches and unexcelled institutions of education and instruction, crowned with that latest and most distinguished addition to our educational facilities, the celebrated Clark University.

Mr. Wall's address occupied about an hour in the delivery, was listened to with marked attention, and warmly applauded at the close. Like the other addresses of a similar character by the speaker, relating to other localities, it was recognized as a valuable contribution to our local history, and requested to be printed in full.

Remarks followed by Hon. Clark Jillson, B. W. Potter, Esq., Ezekiel Newton of Westboro, Joseph Lovell, the oldest person present, and Rev. Alonzo Sanderson of Laurel Street Church, each giving some interesting reminiscences relative to matters referred to in the address. On motion of H. J. Allen, a vote of thanks was extended to Mr. Wall for his address, and to Mr. Lowell for his liberal hospitality. A very pleasant feature of the occasion was the presence of Ezekiel Newton of Westborough, an owner and occupant of the premises for 39 years — from 1831 to 1870 — who renewed many old associations with his former neighbors and friends here.

Letters were read from Mayor Winslow, President Hall of Clark University, and Hon. W. W. Rice, regretting their inability to be present in response to invitations.

At the close of the exercises a generous collation was served by Mr. Lowell, who secured the services of caterer Rebboli for the occasion, which will be long remembered.

COMMENDATORY LETTERS.

Several other letters, besides those previously alluded to, have been received from prominent gentlemen interested in the enterprise in which Mr. Wall is engaged, warmly encouraging him in the same. Among them, Charles F. Washburn, Esq., a native of Worcester, and representing the largest business enterprise in the county, the Washburn & Moen Manufacturing Company, writes :

“I want to thank you for your very kind invitation to listen to your address at North Worcester. I should have been very glad to have availed myself of the same, had not other imperative engagements stood in the way.”

Mayor Winslow's letter, dated Dec. 5, was in these words :

“Mr Wall—My Dear Sir. I extremely regret that my official duties at the City Hall, Friday evening, will prevent my accepting your polite invitation to be present at the farm house of A. S. Lowell, on that evening. I have been very much interested in the historical sketches you have so carefully made of so many places of note within our city, and I can but hope they may be compiled and placed within the reach of all our citizens. Accept my thanks.

Respectfully,

SAMUEL WINSLOW.

Ex-Mayor and Ex-Congressman W. W. Rice wrote Dec. 5 :

“My Dear Mr. Wall.—I was hoping to accept in person your very kind invitation to hear your lecture at Mr. Lowell's. There is no subject I am more interested in than the history of those old farms. If, as I fear, other engagements may prevent my attending, I hope to have the pleasure of perusing it in print.

Very truly yours,

W. W. RICE.

Similar words of commendation have been received from Ex-Mayor Edward L. Davis, a “native and to the manner born” of our noble city. Principal A. S. Roe of the High School, and others, encouraging Mr. Wall to persevere in the good work he is doing.

President G. Stanley Hall, of Clark University, in his letter of thanks for the invitation, “regretted exceedingly that another engagement prevented him from attending the meeting.”

Hon. George William Curtis, of New York, whose ancestors for five generations were residents of Worcester, wrote expressing the great interest and pleasure with which he had read the reports of several of Mr. Wall's addresses and papers on Worcester, adding, “I find that whatever concerns Worcester, seems through my ancestors, down to my father, to concern me.”