

Chapter X

NANAQUAKET, PUNCATEST AND SAKONET

We have seen that, at the close of the Indian war, in 1676, the southerly boundary of the Freeman's land was at the present location of Bedford street in Fall River.

Southerly from this boundary was a vast Indian domain and hunting-ground which extended to the ocean at Sakonet, and westerly from Sippican (Rochester) river and its mouth at Buzzard's Bay, to the Narragansett shores.

Sakonet (Little Compton) with the same northern boundary as at present, had been sold, partially divided, a few (three) frontier buildings had been built, and permanent occupation was about to begin when the war started. There were also a few other scattered localities in this section where colonization had begun.

At the foot of Anthony's hill, near the present settlement of Stone Bridge in Tiverton, was a crude wharf with the structures necessary for the operation of a ferry by which the Rhode Island settlements were reached. The first (Howland) ferry was about forty rods northerly of the Stone Bridge, and considerably west of the present shore line, where stood a fine row of poplar trees. Due to tidal encroachment the landing and the trees have been carried away, and there is approximately fifteen feet of water at this spot. When the old ferry landing was discontinued access to the "Island" was over ferries which operated further north from wharves near the foot of Anthony's hill.

At Nanaquaket was a settlement which had been made by men from Pocasset in Rhode Island, when they sought pasturage for their cattle and a fertile soil for their gardens.

"Puncatesett Necke" (See Plymouth town record of March 22, 1663) had been "laid out" to and "entered upon" by the seventy-five freemen of Plymouth, but no substantial structures had been built there.

At Puncatest main-land, fertile lands had been purchased from local Indians. These lands (including a presently-existing mill site) were adjacent to the old path from Dartmouth, whence Dartmouth men (including some of the purchasers) were wont to come and cross the ferry to Newport where the Baptists among them attended church. This place was known as Nomquid or Nonquit (now Tiverton Four Corners).

All of these settlements must be referred to before we give detailed study to the Pocasset Purchase and its territory, which included the whole of Tiverton, a larger part of Fall River and some other adjacent lands.

The Pocasset Ferry

(Colonial ferries bore the nomenclature of their destination, rather than the name of the principal base from which they were operated).

From Portsmouth Records

When the lots on the Portsmouth neck were laid out in 1639, it was a condition of the deed which was given to Thomas Gorton that he should "keep a ferry". In March 1640 Gorton's rates were fixed at six pence for each man ferried, but only threepence if above three were taken over at the same time. He was ordered to build a boat, and others were forbidden to ferry passengers by canoe after the boat was finished. In 1647 Gorton and the town council were not in accord about the ferry rates and the council was authorized to get another ferryman if he refused to capitulate.

In 1654 Robert Bulgar was licensed to sell beer, food and liquors to strangers who pass the ferry and to those employed in the transportation of cattle to or from the island. In 1658 Ralph Earle, Jr. went to Plymouth in behalf of the colony and his ferrying charges of two shillings were paid by the town.

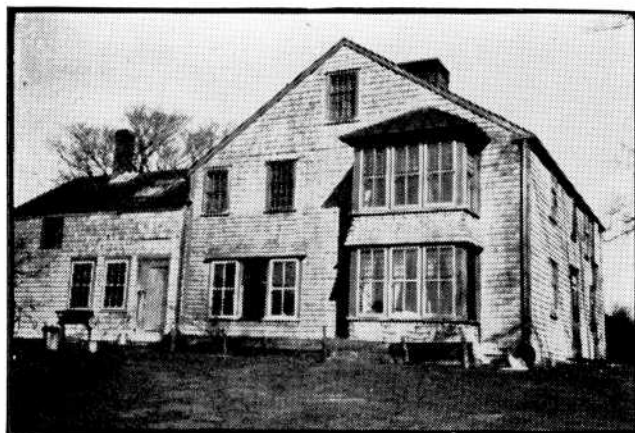
On July 5, 1669 Ralph Allen of Dartmouth was given liberty to keep a ferry at or near Pocasset and to purchase one hundred acres of land.

In June 1674 John Simmons of Duxbury who had married Betty Peabody's daughter, was granted authority to erect a house at Pocasset (V-149) with consent of the proprietors there, and on condition that he "keep a sufficient ferry and an ordinary" (tavern) for the entertainment of travelers and strangers, maintain order "and prevent abuses".

After King Philip's war, viz: on November 1, 1676, the Court again



Pabodie Gray House, Little Compton, R. I.
(East View)



Pabodie Gray House, Little Compton, R. I.
(West View)

ordered a ferry at Pocasset (prohibiting any other on that coast), allowed 20 acres of land appurtenant to the ferry for pasture and planting, and again appointed John Simmons to be the ferryman for five years, "at the end of which time he was to be reimbursed for any housing he might erect, if he quits the ferry".

At the same time it was decreed that no cattle or horses be driven for pasturage from Rhode Island to Pocasset "unless first viewed and marked". A penalty was fixed at twice their value and, if pastured without leave of lessees, they were to be impounded until satisfaction of their trespass be made. Also ordered that the owners of such cattle be taxed (rated) and that no timber be cut and removed from the colony.

In June 1677 ferry rates were again fixed and it was ordered that if any other than Simmons ferried over persons or cattle they were to be fined five shillings for each offence, half to Simmons and half to the colony. Captain Church was then (with others) lessee of the herbage and grass on the Pocasset lands, but in October 1677 it was let to Nathaniel Thomas, Edward Gray and John Rogers for one year at the rent of ten pounds.

At the first meeting of the proprietors of the Pocasset Purchase, April 11, 1681 they voted that "none keep a public ferry, but only such as the ferry lots shall be hired to".

Nanaquaket

Prior to 1659 the colony had trouble with one Capt. Richard Morris, of Rhode Island, who had purchased from the Indians several parcels of Tiverton land, and claimed title to the same. He had come from Roxbury, and as a follower of Ann Hutchinson had come with her to Portsmouth. On June 7, 1659 he reached an agreement with the colony whereby he was recognized as the owner of Nanaquaket Neck (or "Pochasset"), which contained about 457 acres of land, and also of a parcel of meadow on the east side of the pond, on condition that he should submit himself to the Plymouth colony, and "do such duty as might be required of him, should not engage in controversies with the Indians, and should resign up to the Court all such other lands as he had made purchase of or laid claim to." Following this agreement he took the oath of fidelity on March 7, 1660, but he did not obtain his Colonial deed till 1680. Morris had been admitted as a freeman in Portsmouth in 1640; was a member of the General Court in 1651 and in 1653/4 was captain and in charge with others of the colonial offence and defence.

Puncatest Neck

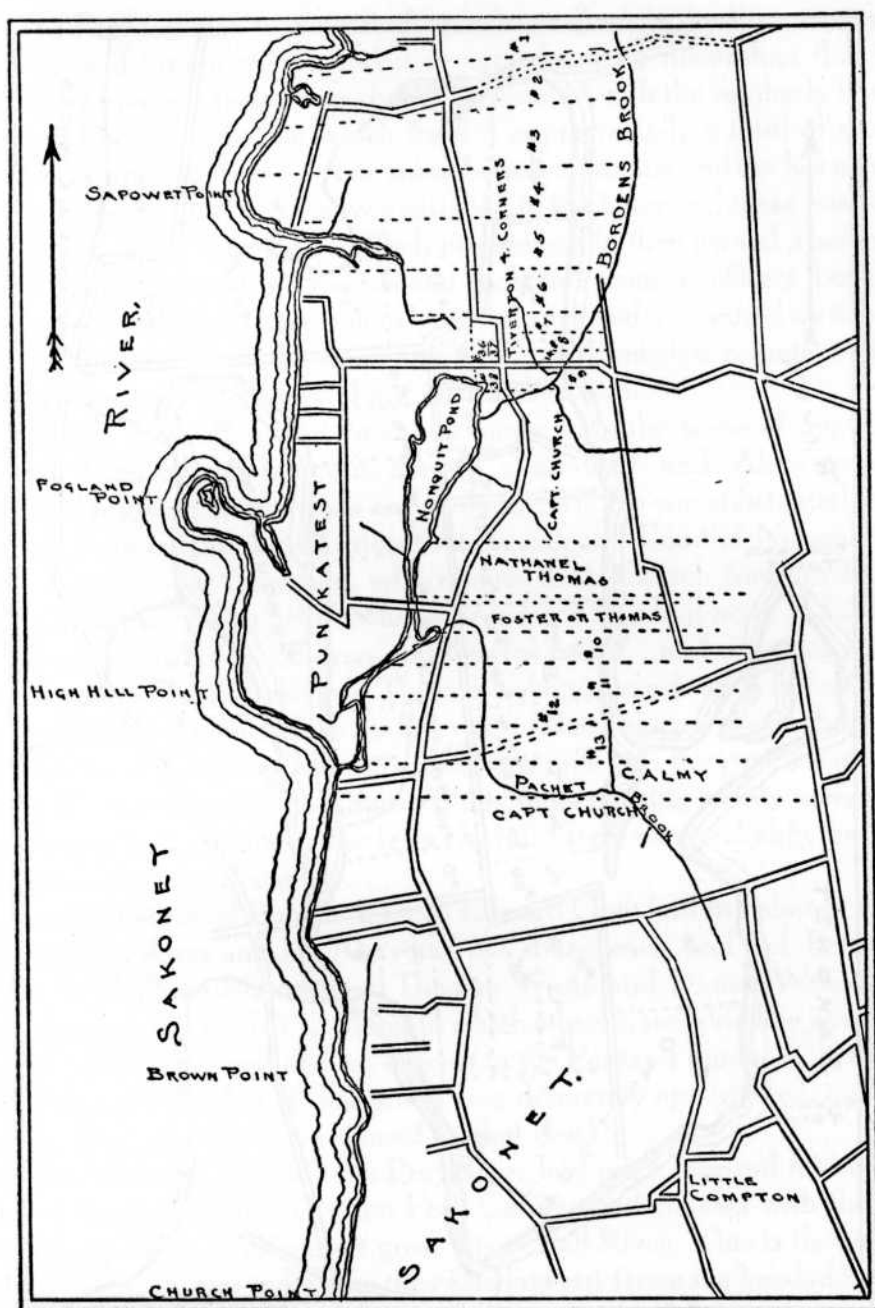
At the March term in 1660, when Morris was given rights in Nanaquaket the Court ordered that Whereas the lands granted to Morris had previously been assigned to the "Inhabitants of the Town of Plymouth", that the Plymouth men be allowed to select other lands "in its stead" and they selected Puncatest Neck. The Court then ordered that no town could make sale of its Puncatest land except to its own townsmen. In 1663 the Puncatest Neck lands were divided among the freemen of Plymouth. There were seventy-five freemen, but only thirty-six lots were laid out, two of the seventy-two freemen to each lot, and other land to satisfy the three who did not draw lots there. A full description of each lot and of the persons to whom they were assigned is set forth at pages 36 and 62 of Vol. 1 of the Plymouth Town Records.

I will not reproduce these but I have abstracted the title to these lots for a considerable period of years, have drafted a sketch of them taken from the records, and my friend Henry J. Harvey, the surveyor for the town of Somerset, has assisted in preparing from my notes two drawings from which plates have been made and presented herewith. They show the relative location of each of these lots.

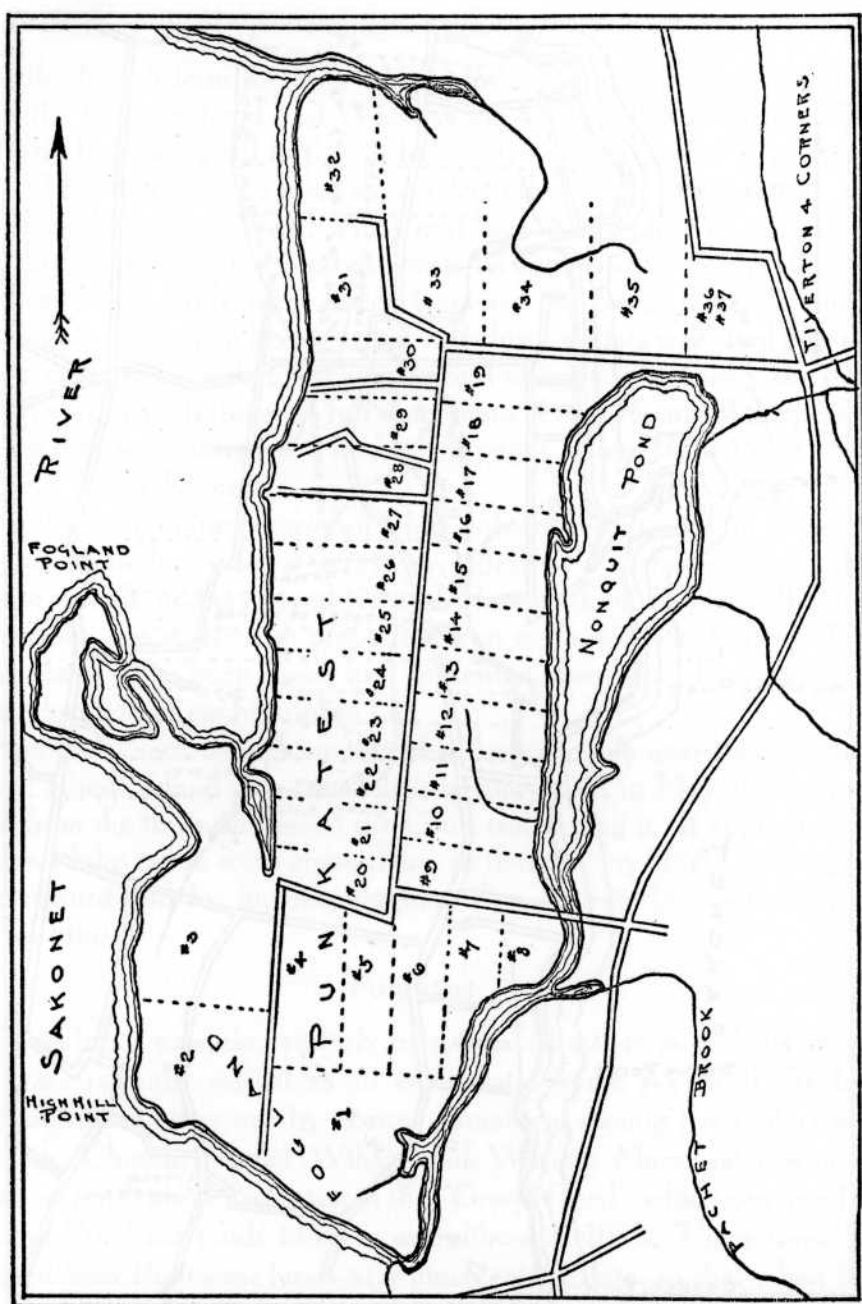
Puncatest Neck owners continued to have trouble over the encroachment of Rhode Island men upon their territory, and in May 1662 a committee from the town addressed the Court concerning it. It appeared that Sachem Philip made some claim there, so that in May 1665 he was given "as a reward and for his encouragement" a gratuity for confirming the colonial title.

Puncatest

These lands extended easterly from the Sakonet river to Acoaxet and they were partially settled at an early date (some say in 1673) from Dartmouth and other nearby towns. Prominent among the settlers were Benjamin Church, Daniel Wilcox and William Manchester who are named as residents of Puncatest in the "Grand Deed" which conveyed the Pocasset Purchase lands to them and others in 1680. These three had acquired their Puncatest lands at a much earlier date, so that when their lands were included in the descriptive clause of the Pocasset grant which was made to include many other grantees, there was a duplicate purchase which had to be adjusted. This difficulty arose because their Indian deeds had not had the colonial sanction which was required by law.



Puncatest Lands (1)



Puncatest Lands (2)

The Pocasset men were termed "purchasers" while the Puncatest men were termed "proprietors", and they agreed among themselves that the boundary between their lands should correspond with the southerly line of thirtieth Pocasset great lot which fixed it approximately a third of a mile south of Seapowet Avenue. The space between this line and the lots owned by the Puncatest individuals was assigned to the latter and these lots were called Puncatest "Out-Lots". Each proprietorship then owned a separate estate, each kept separate records and each had separate officers, but they conducted their affairs harmoniously, and if an outsider acquired an interest in the Puncatest lands, he was required to pay Puncatest proprietors four pounds for each and every share awarded to him.

During the Indian war Puncatest lands were the scene of important events. Then and at a later time Almy's "pease field" and "Almy's wharf" assumed historical importance, and at the close of the war substantial tracts of land were awarded to warriors. At the colonial Court of November 1, 1676 Capt. Roger Goulding, who rescued Col. Church from an Indian ambush at the "pease field", was awarded one hundred acres of land, as a "constant, real, very officious and helpful friend", and a similar award was made to David Lake and Thomas Lake inasmuch as they had been "very useful and servicable in the late war". These two tracts were bounded on Puncatest Pond and were to extend one mile into the woods eastward and adjacent to the Sakonet line. At this same meeting twenty acres were "appointed to appertain to the ferry" but this ferry was probably the John Simmons ferry at Pocasset.

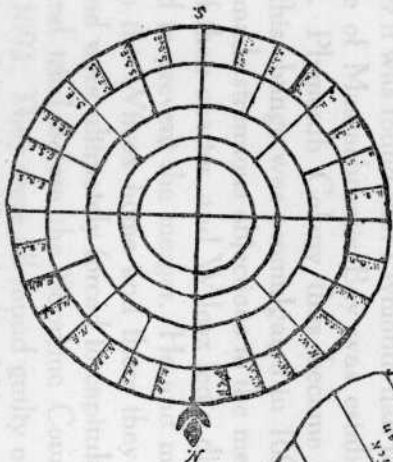
In the division of Puncatest lands Edward Gray had five shares, Capt. Christopher Almy and Job Almy had two shares each, and Col. Benjamin Church, William Manchester, Thomas Waite and Daniel Wilcox had one share each, a total of 13 shares to which others were added by purchase. While all of these had also an interest in the Pocasset purchase, it will be noted that the number of shares was very differently apportioned, and that many other grantees were named in that deed.

On February 24, 1683 the Proprietors laid out a four-rod highway to run northerly from the Tiverton Four Corners and connect with the way which ran across the Pocasset great lots to Fall River. This is the present Main Road. At this same time they also laid out (from the head of Puncatest Pond) a highway running easterly "into the woods", and they ordered that the land lying between this way and the mill site "*lie in common*", so that cattle might have room to go to the brook and pond in time of drought. I have located a detailed layout of this road in a deed recorded in Book B

at page 212 of the Copied Fall River Records, from which it appears that a second mill called "Edwards Mill" was located at "Stony Brook" (a short distance easterly from the Four Corners); that the distance from this mill dam to Sisson's Corner was thirty-two hundred feet, and that at Sisson's Corner this road met the "Dartmouth and Westport Road". This road connected at its easterly end with the way to Dartmouth, and was one of the main "east and west" arteries of travel. Over it Acoaxet and "Cushnea" residents reached the ferry and connected with Pocasset and Newport. On the northerly side of this same road was located the first tavern which was constructed in this area. It was entertaining guests as early as 1749, for on a "parade ground" (opposite the tavern) the Tiverton militia met for training in that year. It was a "very old structure" in 1776 when it was used as a place of rendezvous by a militia company, so that probably the tavern was built much prior to 1749. In June of 1776 Tiverton had voted a bounty of thirty shillings for each enlisted soldier.

The water power at the Puncatest mill was important to the inhabitants of both towns (Sakonnet and Puncatest). In 1710 each town appointed a committee to improve it. The mill lot and its primitive mill then belonged to Joseph Taber (he and Stephen Taber were partners). It was called "Taber's Saw and Grist Mill", but important as it was it would not grind more than two bushel of corn an hour. This mill was at the site of the present grist mill, on the easterly side of the Main Road, and a short distance south of Tiverton Four Corners. I find record that attached to this mill site was an eighty acre lot which I presume was the mill pond. Benjamin Church, representing the joint committees, arranged with Mr. Taber to enlarge the mill. One hundred and sixty acres had been set apart to Mr. Church, as a subsidy, to establish the mill. He bargained to give Mr. Taber one-half of this land for building the mill. This mill lot of eighty acres included the home of the widow of Daniel Wilcox and the residence of Pardon Cory. After the mill had been built, fifteen lots of land were laid out adjoining the mill lot on the east, twelve of which had a frontage of six rods and extended east for a depth of fifty-five rods to a new road. Other lots were laid out on the road which ran to Puncatest Neck. These had a frontage of four rods each and were forty rods deep. They were bounded west by the pond and south by the mill lot. These thirty building sites constituted the nucleus of the village of Tiverton Four Corners.

The pond which separates the main land from the neck then had the name "Nomscot" and that name was also applied to the village. The new mill was called the "Nomscot Mill". At a later time Ebenezer Davenport



Joseph Howland	20
John Almy	19
Joseph Church	18
Thomas Pinson	17
Thomas Pope	16
Walter Woodworth	15
Josiah Cooke	14
Benja Church	13
Capt. Colomer	12
Wm. Pabodie	11
Gov. Winstow	10
Wm. Forbes	9
Danill Wilcox	8
Capt. Southworth	7
Ephraim Tinkham	6
Wm. Mirick	5
Joseph Church	4
John Washborne	3
Wm. Sherman	2
John Irish	1

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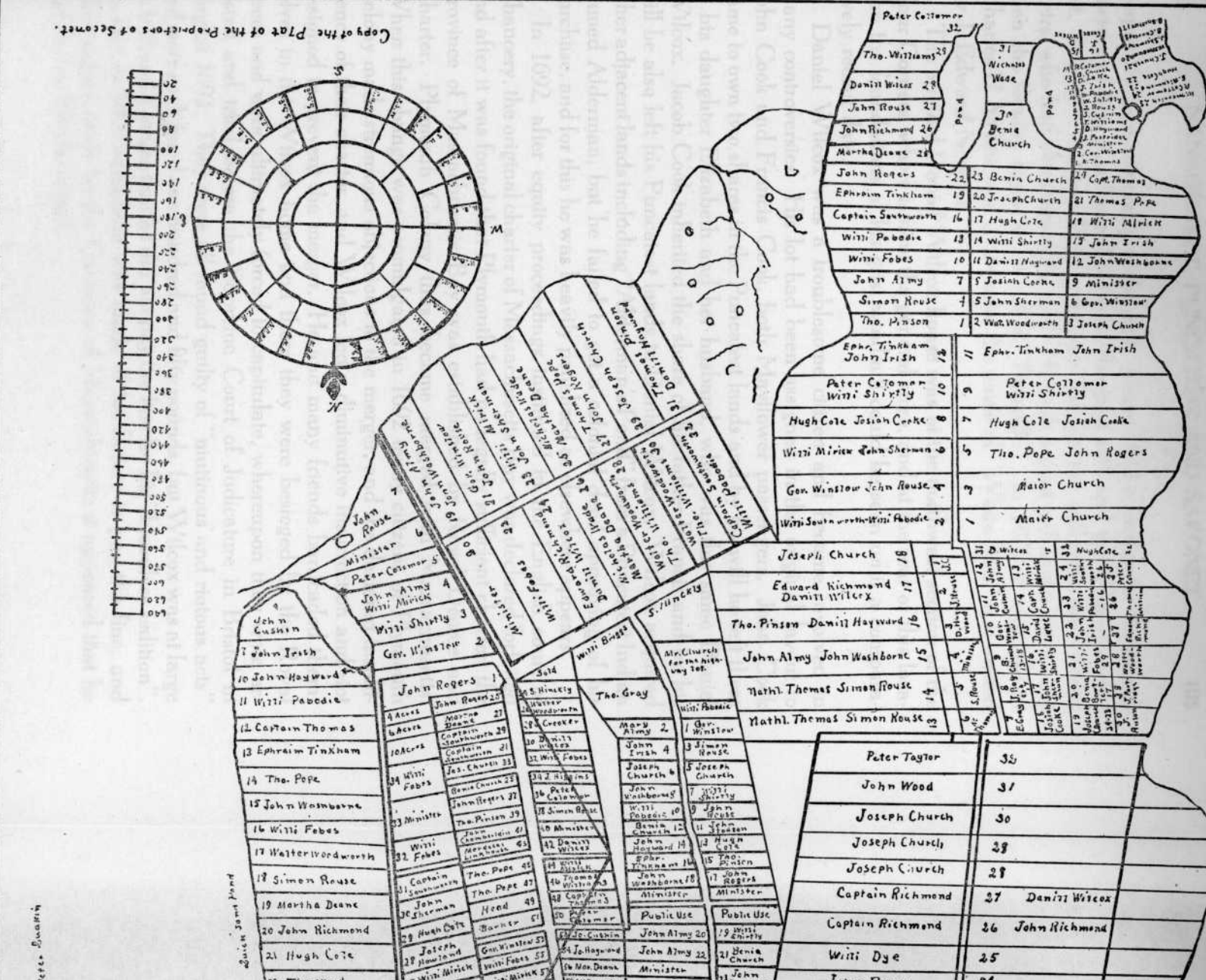
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Peter Colomer	32
Thos. Williams	29
Danill Wilcox	28
John Rouse	27
John Richmond	26
Martha Deane	25
John Rogers	24
Ephraim Tinkham	19
Captain Southworth	16
Wm. Pabodie	13
Wm. Forbes	10
John Almy	7
Simon Rouse	4
Thos. Pinson	1
Ephraim Tinkham	19
Peter Colomer	32
Hugh Cole	31
Wm. Mirick	30
Gov. Winstow	29
Wm. Southworth	28
Wm. Pabodie	27
John Almy	26
Simon Rouse	25
Thos. Pinson	24
Ephraim Tinkham	23
Peter Colomer	22
Hugh Cole	21
Wm. Mirick	20
Gov. Winstow	19
Wm. Southworth	18
Wm. Pabodie	17
John Almy	16
Simon Rouse	15
Thos. Pinson	14
Ephraim Tinkham	13
Peter Colomer	12
Hugh Cole	11
Wm. Mirick	10
Gov. Winstow	9
Wm. Southworth	8
Wm. Pabodie	7
John Almy	6
Simon Rouse	5
Thos. Pinson	4
Ephraim Tinkham	3
Peter Colomer	2
Hugh Cole	1

Peter Taylor	35
John Wood	34
Joseph Church	33
Joseph Church	32
Joseph Church	31
Captain Richmond	30
Captain Richmond	29
Wm. Dye	28
John Rouse	27
John Price	26
Jonathan Thurston	25
Aaron Davis	24
John Rogers	23
Maier Church	22
Maier Church	21
Thos. Gray	20
John Irish	19
Simon Rouse	18
John Washborne	17
Danill Grinnell	16
Wm. Mirick	15
Wm. Forbes	14
Minister	13
John Woodman	12
John Woodman	11
John Cushin	10
Daria Lake	9
Mm. Thos. Wood	8
Wm. Shintly	7
Peter Colomer	6
Walter Woodworth	5
Josiah Cooke	4

acquired a part ownership in the mill. About 1813 a factory for the manufacture of hats was located between the grist mill and the Wilcox corner lot. In 1847 "William Pitt Brightman" bought the mill from the Wilcox heirs, who had abandoned the mill. He built a grist mill and a store, and then the locality came to be called "Pittsville". In 1876 it was sold to Charles H. White and now under the name of "White Mill" it is owned by J. Edward Newton.

The original Daniel Wilcox house was at the northwest section of the Four Corners, where is now the general store, and at the rear of this location the foundations of his grist windmill could be seen until a comparatively recent date.

Daniel Wilcox was a troublesome citizen and became involved in many controversies. His lot had been assigned in the original layout to John Cook and Francis Cook, both Mayflower passengers. John Cook came to own two shares in the Puncatest lands and by his will he left them to his daughter Elizabeth and her husband, who was this same Daniel Wilcox. Jacob Cook inherited the share of his father Francis and by his will he also left his Puncatest lands to Daniel Wilcox. Wilcox acquired other adjacent lands including "Alderman's Pond" from a Puncatest Indian named Alderman, but he failed to get a colonial deed approving of his purchase, and for this he was heavily penalized as elsewhere appears.

In 1692, after equity proceedings instituted in the English court of Chancery, the original charter of Massachusetts Bay was declared forfeited and after it was found that Plymouth had no legally sufficient charter, the Province of Massachusetts Bay was established by Royal Decree and Charter. Plymouth Colony thus became merged with Massachusetts. When this change was promulgated in 1692 many citizens of Plymouth Colony made strenuous objections to the merger, and the declared insufficiency of their charter, and Wilcox led a diminutive insurrection and riot designed to prevent the merger. He and many friends barricaded themselves in the Wilcox home and there they were besieged by the Royal forces and were ultimately forced to capitulate, whereupon they were arrested and tried before the Supreme Court of Judicature in Bristol in August 1693. They were all found guilty of "mutinous and riotous acts" and were each fined one hundred and fifty pounds, but Wilcox was at large on bail and it seems that he did not pay the fine for his "bloodless sedition". As late as 1699 complaint was made of his failure to pay the fine, and after inquiry made by the Governor of Massachusetts it appeared that he had fled to Rhode Island.

At the northeast of the Tiverton Four corners there was an early store operated by William H. Davol. At this corner the first post office was established in February 1820.

At the southwest corner there was an old store and bakery. The foundation of the old oven could be traced until a recent date.

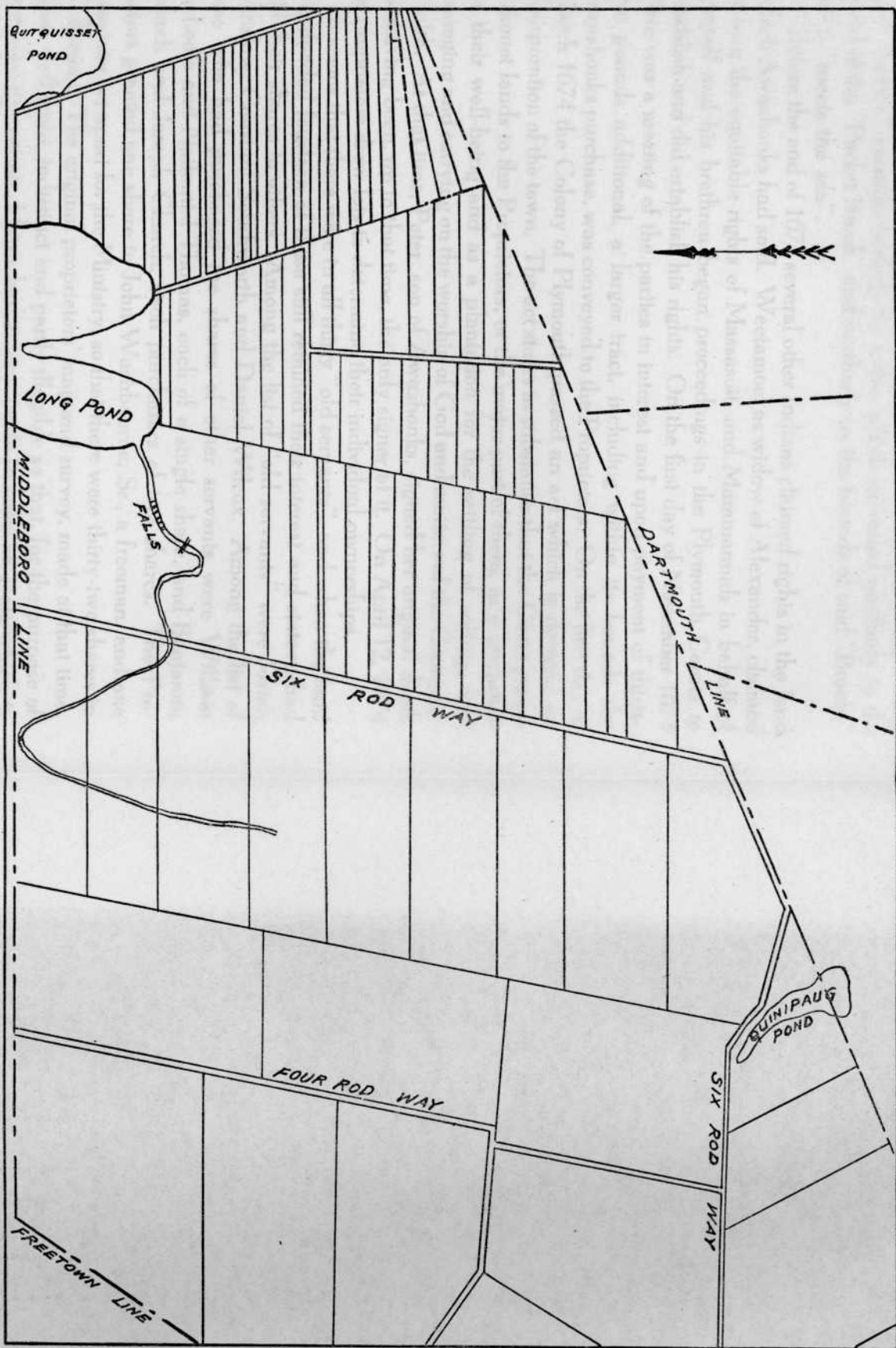
In 1694 Puncatest and Pocasset were incorporated under the name of Tiverton.

Sakonet

Sakonet settlers ("Sakonet" meaning in the Indian language the 'mouth of the stream') were the "old servants" of the Plymouth gentry, or those to whom servant rights were sold. It was a custom till a very recent time for parents to apprentice their wards and children, and for older persons to apprentice themselves to a trade under the schooling of skilled artisans or more wealthy citizens. It was a part of a system of education which was then in vogue. A covenant of service often provided for an emolument at the end of the term, which in the case of land workers sometimes took the form of a gift of land. An apprentice agreement was binding on both parties as is shown by Court decree on a complaint filed by Jonathan Briggs that he, being a servant of William Hailstone of Taunton, — the latter did not "learn him" the trade of tailor, as covenanted. The Court ordered Hailstone to pay fifteen pounds damage with all convenient speed, but it took Briggs two years and three court proceedings before he got his money, which illustrates well the speed of Court procedure even in those days. (See Ply. Col. Records Vol. III, p. 51).

In 1636 a colonial law provided that servants "who come out of their terms and are to have lands, shall have only five acres apiece at present if they be found fit to occupy it". In 1646 an amended law required "that such as covenant to give lands to their servants shall make good from their own estates". Servants were required to serve, even after they bought out their time.

The General Court voted in June 1661 to purchase land for the old servants at Sakonet, and those servants who desired to participate in the settlement were required to present themselves before the Court on July 22, 1673 and prove their right. At that time the claims of twenty-nine servants were allowed. On July 31, 1673 the Sakonet proprietors held their first meeting in Duxbury. All the Proprietors' meetings were held at that place until 1687, so that comparatively few of the "old servants" actually visited the Sakonet lands. On July 31, 1673 in consideration of seventy pounds



sterling, Awashonks, in behalf of her tribe, made conveyance of the lands which are bounded on the west by the sea or sound; on the south by a line which extended one mile easterly and westerly from a white oak tree in the "Tompe" swamp; easterly by a line which extended northerly to the head of the "Packet Brook" and northerly by the bounds of said "Brooke" till it "meets the sea".

Before the end of 1673 several other Indians claimed rights in the land which Awashonks had sold. Weetamoe, as widow of Alexander, claimed to own the equitable rights of Massasoit, and Mammanuah in behalf of himself and his brethren began proceedings in the Plymouth Courts to establish and did establish his rights. On the first day of November 1673 there was a meeting of the parties in interest and upon payment of thirty-five pounds additional, a larger tract, including within its bounds the Awashonks purchase, was conveyed to the Proprietors. On the first day of March 1674 the Colony of Plymouth passed an act which is deemed an incorporation of the town. The act states in substance that the Court grants Sakonet lands to the Proprietors, or the major part of them, as a township for their well-being and as a plantation for the settling of society, and managing and carrying on the worship of God and matters of the Commonwealth. At that time, Peter, son of Awashonks, signed her original deed, she having been, up to that time, the only signer of it. On April 12, 1674 the proprietors drew lots to determine their individual ownerships.

It seems that there were in all thirty "old servants", and when the land was divided fourteen of these still retained their interest and sixteen had sold their shares to others. Among the list of "old servants" were Josiah Winslow, Constant Southworth and Daniel Wilcox. Among the list of those who had purchased the shares of other servants were William Paybodie and Nathaniel Thomas, each of a single share, and Benjamin Church and Joseph Church, each purchasers of two shares. The Proprietors granted one share to John Washbourne, Sr., a freeman, and one share was set apart for the Ministry, so that there were thirty-two shares in the division. The original proprietors' map and survey, made at that time, is now well worn, indistinct and partly illegible so that, for the purpose of preserving its contour, I have had a copy made in reduced scale which is included in this history. I shall not attempt to study in detail ownership of the various lots. They are named in Bayles' History of Newport County. William Paybodie was the clerk of the proprietors.

Attention is called to two important historical objects in Sakonet which are worthy of special observation and study. *First* is what is known as the

William Paybodie residence. This house, known as the Paybodie-Gray house, built in 1681 to 1683, is located on the west side of the Sakonet Point road and is on the lot which is next northerly of that upon which Capt. Benjamin Church built his original home. It descended from the Paybodies to the Gray family, and is now owned in direct line of descent by Miss Lizzie A. Gray. In the original kitchen is a big colonial fire place with fittings such as were used in Colonial homes. The house is substantially in its original form, except for a bay window which is more modern but in perfect harmony with the main structure; the oak timbers and original stair-cases are still intact although there has been some necessary replacement. It is a private home not open to public inspection. A picture of this old house is shown.

Another important historical object is the "Wilbour Woods" and this I have discussed in the story of Awashonks, and have exhibited a few views of its forest.