

He first married Sarah Hartwell, by whom he had five sons and four daughters, and afterwards Elizabeth, widow of John Gragg. His five sons all married and had families in Groton. The youngest son, Noah Shattuck Esq., still survives

## THE HISTORY OF PEPPERELL

That part of Groton lying west of Nashua river and north of the country road, as traveled a century ago from Groton to Townsend, was set off as a district precinct, or parish, in the year 1742, and called "Groton West Parish,"

At a legal meeting of said parish, held January 17, 1742, at the house of **Mr. William Spaulding**, Benjamin Swallow was chosen moderator; **Eleazer Gilson**, parish clerk; Benjamin Sallow, Isaac Williams, James Lawrence, **Samuel Wright, treasurer; Jonas Varnum [brother of Dorothy who married David Shattuck, RCB]**, Moses Woods, and **Samuel Shattuck**, assessors; and **William Spaulding** and Jeremiah Lawrence, collectors. This was undoubtedly the first parish meeting and organization of the parish under the act of the General Court by which it was incorporated. At this meeting, the sum of ten pounds, lawful money, was voted to be assessed to defray the necessary charges arisen and arising in said parish.

*[Attending this meeting were four of the ancestors of Prescott Parker Wright, and the continuing generations of Wrights RCB]*

While this territory remained a parish, nothing of a public nature, unconnected with Groton, except of a parochial character, was transacted therein. Building a meeting-house and settling a minister, were of course the first and only matters which called for action, and were put on record.

The second meeting was held at the house of James Lawrence, February 16, 1742, at which the parish voted to build a meeting-house, and that it should be set at "the most convenient place near Joseph Blood's fordway;" a well known place, between the paper-mills at Babbittsett and Jewett's bridge.

About the same time, it was voted "to receive the people on the east side of the river, that have petitioned to be annexed to us, provided they will consent to have the meeting-house set at the most convenient place on the west side the river, near the bridge, next below No. Blood's ford-way, so called."

But the momentous affairs of deciding upon a spot on which to set a public building, and choosing and settling a minister, are not usually accomplished without much strife and contention, and are sometimes attended with long and furious quarrels and expensive lawsuits. The reason of this, the Rev. Mr. Emerson, the first minister of the parish, in his sermon at the dedication of the second meeting-house, explains in this manner: "It hath been observed, " says he, "that some of the hottest contentions in this land hath been about settling of ministers and building meeting-houses; and what is the reason? The devil is a great enemy to settling ministers and building meeting-houses; wherefore he sets on his own children to work and make difficulties, and to the utmost of his power stirs up the corruptions of the children of God in some way to oppose or obstruct so good a work."

If the true reason was assigned by the Rev. Mr. Emerson, it would seem that either the west parish of Groton consisted of a large proportion of the devil's children at this time, or that the corruptions of the saints were too easily wrought upon by Satan. Before the expiration of a year, a parish meeting was called, a vote passed to reconsider the vote fixing the place for the house. The parish having been surveyed, the centre found, and the northeast line of three fourths of a mile run out, the site for the meeting-house was determined on, which was agreeable to the wishes of a majority of the parish, the north and east parts being more settled than the west. Some of the timber for the house was brought to the spot; but the devil, according to the Rev. Mr. Emerson's theory, was busy setting on his own children, and stirring up the corruptions of others; the minority, living in the centre and west part, being not well pleased with the location, with Moses Woods at their head, made such resistance to the proceedings of the majority, that the destruction of the parish was threatened. Whereupon the aid of the Great and General Court was invoked; Peleg Lawrence and Josiah Sartell were appointed a committee to supplicate the legislature to take measures to end the dispute. The Great and General Court, in mercy to the distracted condition of the parish, appointed a committee to survey the place and locate the meeting-house. The parish chose a committee "to show the Courts' committee the inhabitants of the place." It seems that the Court's committee promptly attended to the business assigned to them, and they agreed upon the spot where the first parish meeting-house in Pepperell now stands; and the parish voted, February 19, 1745, "to set the meeting-house on the place that the General Court prefixed." Upon this final result, the Rev. Mr. Emerson, in the sermon above quoted, remarks:

One thing I cannot but mention, as a kind interposition of divine Providence, though considered as such by very few in the time, and that is, the fixing the place for the meeting-house, though fixed contrary to the mind and the vote of the majority of the inhabitants by a Court's committee, yet proves now to be with much more equity; and where all seem to be universally contended with. Had it been erected in the place designed, and where even the timber was drawn to, what trouble, charge and 'tis very likely contention, we must have been exercised with before this day.

The devil having been thus foiled by the Court's committee, but not entirely "cast out," made one effort more to obstruct the building of a meeting-house. When the men, employed to remove the timber from the place where it had been deposited to the site determined upon, had assembled for the purpose, and their teams were in readiness to move with it, James Lakin, a leader in the previous minority of the parish, who were rejoiced at the decision of the Court's committee, took the lead with his team. A number of the inhabitants of the east part, greatly enraged at the decision, many of whom bore the name of Shattuck, collected on the spot; and when the teams were put in motion, they attempted to prevent their forward movement by pricking the noses of the oxen. Lakin, being a stout, strong, athletic man, and probably somewhat excited by the outrage, soon put the whole of them to rout, and let the teams quietly pass on. [*Fame says the Shattucks, on this occasion, were piled on the road-side "six or eight deep"*]

Soon after this the meeting-house was raised, and so far finished as to be occupied in the former part of the year 1745. But, from sundry votes passed, it seems not to have been completed, and that occasionally work was done upon it, and improvements made for several succeeding years. The following are extracts from the votes about building and completing it.

- "Voted, that said committee frame, raise, and board the outside and shingle the roof, lay the under floor and make suitable doors and hang the same."
- "To build the pulpit and the body seats below."
- "To seat the meeting-house."
- "Set off the pews (or pew ground) to the highest payers in the three last rates."
- "To ceil the meeting-house as high as the girths all around."
- "That windows be cut where needed, provided, they that cut them maintain them upon their own cost, that they be no parish charge."
- "To finish the building seats in the gallery, and to ceil the meeting-house from the gallery floor up to the beams."
- "To glaze the public meeting-house, and to provide boards to lay loose on the floor over-head."
- "To seat the public meeting-house by the three last years' pay."
- "Top give the men that are seated on the fore seats below, liberty to set a row of banisters (balusters) with a rail-stop before the fore seats, at their own cost and charge."

Judging from these votes, it would seem, that this first house, if it were now before us in its best state, could be called little better than a shantee. But it served for the people of the west parish in Groton, and the district of Pepperell, for about twenty-five years, and no doubt but the praises and prayers therein offered were as sincere and as acceptable to Him, "who regardeth the heart," as those raised in the most magnificent temple ever constructed by human hands.

April 12, 1753, Groton west parish was made a district by an act of the Great and General Court, in conformity to a petition by the inhabitants, and named Pepperell. This name was adopted in honor of Sir William Pepperell of Piscataqua, who commanded an army of six thousand men raised in New England in the year 1745, for the express purpose of reducing Louisburg and subjecting the isle of Cape Breton to the possession of the Great Britain, which was successfully effected. The Rev. Mr. Emerson, who was ordained the minister of Groton west parish about two years after this event, was a chaplain in that expedition, and probably suggested the name in remembrance of his commander. It is said that Sir William gave or intended to give a church bell to the district, that he sent to England and had one cast bearing the inscription of his own name and the following couplet:

I to the church the living call,  
And to the grave I summon all.

That the bell was brought to Boston, stored there and afterwards sold to pay storage. Another tradition is, that it fell into the hands of the British during the war.

May 29, 1753. At the first meeting after incorporation, the district "voted to confirm and establish what was voted in Groton west parish." The practical use or legal effect of this vote is not perceived.

In the year 1767, the district took preparatory steps to build a new meeting-house. They voted to raise the sum of eighty pounds for the purpose, and that the house should be

sixty feet long, forty feet wide and twenty feet high, with porches. In 1768 "voted that the meeting-house be built workman-like." Also:

Chose William Prescott a committee to join the committees from the several towns in this province, considering the awful frowns of divine Providence upon our land and on this Province in a particular manner, whereby our civil privileges are greatly threatened, and considering we are engaged in the important affair of building a new house for the worship of God, voted to set apart Thursday as a day of fasting and prayer, to confess our manifold sins, whereby we have provoked our God to frown upon us in our public affairs, and earnestly to implore the returns of his favor, and particularly to humble ourselves before God, for our unprofitableness under the means of grace we have enjoyed in the old meeting-house, and to entreat his guidance in erecting a new one.

In 1769, a question arose whether the house should have a steeple, which was finally decided in the negative. Cornet Gilson was the undertaker to build the new house, and as part compensation he had the old one, which he removed to his farm and used as a barn. It has since been burnt.

The new house was dedicated March 8, 1770, on which occasion Mr. Emerson preached the sermon, before quoted, from this text, "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." In this discourse Mr. Emerson enumerates various reasons why the people of Pepperell should set up their Ebenezer, and gratefully acknowledge that "hitherto the Lord had helped them." Such as the preservation of the church, when threatened with total destruction; that God had his eye upon New England ever since its settlement; that the number of the inhabitants of Pepperell since his settlement had increased from seventy-two, to one hundred and fifty-two families, and that their interest and wealth had increased in as great proportion; that they had been able to pay the charges of becoming a parish, a district, building a house for worship, and that peace, love and harmony had prevailed in settling the gospel among them; that they had been preserved from savage enemies while it was a frontier place, and they were under the necessity of carrying their weapons of war with them to the house of worship, as they had done since his settlement; that the great sickness, which had prevailed a month among them several years, had been stayed; and that they had been preserved while erecting and finishing the second-meeting-house, not a life having been lost or a bone broken while providing the timber, raising the frame and finishing the house; and finally, that he himself would on this occasion set up his Ebenezer, it being the twenty-third anniversary of his ordination, and acknowledge that "hitherto the Lord had helped him," both in temporal and spiritual things.

This second meeting-house is the same that is now owned and occupied by the first parish in Pepperell. In the year 1836, it having been in constant use for sixty-six years, and being out of repair and not adapted in its form to modern taste, the parish undertook to remodel and repair it throughout. The following extracts from records show the progress of that work.

July 31, 1836. On this day we assembled for public worship for the last time in the old meeting-house; we, on this day, bade adieu to the old places where generation after generation had kept holy time. The parish, with a decisive energy which did them credit,



took the necessary steps in order to the work being effected. Two sermons, appropriate to the occasion, were preached on Sunday, and on Monday the church was stripped of its pews and its whole interior.

The work advanced more slowly than we had hoped. Delays of various kinds inteposed. At length, however, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, the work was finished, and on Thursday, the 27<sup>th</sup>, the house in its new form was solemnly dedicated to the service of Almighty God. It was to us a season of heartfelt joy, of gratitude to God and of mutual congratulation. The work of our hands had been prospered. A new temple had been raised up for us, and we, who had held our religious festivals under the most uncomfortable and disheartening circumstances, were now permitted to worship God amid the beauty of the sanctuary. It is only giving honor to whom honor is due to record in this place, that by the generosity of the ladies of this parish, the pulpit was trimmed and the aisles carpeted throughout. The Bible in two volumes was a generous donation from Mrs. E. Bass of Boston, a daughter of the Rev. Mr. Bullard, a former pastor of this church. The communion table was a present from Mrs. Thomas Bancroft of this town.

A handsome silver goblet was presented by Madam Prescott of Boston, March 1846.

In the year 1831, a large number of the inhabitants of the town including a great majority of the members of the church, withdrew from public worship in the meeting-house, and held meetings for a time in a private hall. They "signed off," as the phrase is, from the town, or first parish, and formed a second parish by the name of the "Evangelical Congregational Society." In 1832, they built a commodious meeting-house, finished in modern style, having a steeple and clock. It was dedicated October 31, 1832.

## CHAPTER XVI

*To illustrate activity of the time, chapter 16 is copied in its entirety.*

The ravages of the Indians had nearly ceased in this vicinity before the settlement of Pepperell. Fears and alarms, however, had not entirely subsided; so that Mr. Emerson says, after his settlement in the ministry, his parishioners carried their weapons to the house of worship.

Pepperell justly claims to have produced many brave officers and soldiers. A military spirit was imbibed and cherished by the encouragements and exhortations of their minister, Mr. Emerson, who having served as chaplain at Cape Breton, took a lively interest ever after in military affairs, especially at the commencement of the revolutionary war.

In the spring of 1758, a company was enlisted for the French war, from Pepperell and its vicinity, of which Thomas Lawrence was captain. As the company were about to take up their march to join the army, Mr. Emerson preached a sermon on the occasion, in which he thus addressed the soldiers:

My Friends and Brethren, -'Tis matter of rejoicing to me, that so many of you have engaged in this affair with so much cheerfulness, and proffered your services for your country; and some of you, I hope, have entered upon it with becoming seriousness. If the present expedition should go forward, according

to our present expectation, (which God grant it may!) and not be stigmatized, as some former ones have been, by the name of a mock expedition, whereby we are become the shame of our friends and contempt of our enemies; I say, if the army should proceed, you will doubtless be called into action, and must expect to jeopardize your lives in the high places of the field. Fix this, then, in your minds, that danger you must encounter; imagine not that you are going out against a weak and effeminate enemy, who will be affrighted as soon as they hear of your approach, or be intimidated by the very sound of your drums, and run away as soon as you charge them, and you have nothing to do, but fall upon the prey, and load yourselves with the spoils. Far from this. You are going against an enemy who are far from being dastardly; an enemy flushed with various and repeated successes. And as you are designed, by the present concerted scheme of operation, to enter the very heart of the enemy's country, you may well expect that they will not tamely resign their possessions into your hands. I say not these things to discourage you, but rather to animate you to set out with greater resolution and courage. If you alight upon dangers, this will not make them heavier when they come, and it may serve something to lessen them. You are to fight; you are enlisted for this end; you are paid for this purpose. Boldly, then, advance into the very heart of your enemy's country. Fear them not; let it never be said of a New England soldier, let it never be said of a Pepperell soldier, that he was afraid to face his enemies, or that ever he turned his back on them, and cowardly deserted the cause of his country.

Capt. Lawrence, the commander of this company, is represented as a man of gigantic stature, Herculean strength, bold and courageous, experienced in Indian warfare, and holding in thorough contempt the valor of the savages. He often said, he would never run for an Indian or Indians, and that he would never be taken alive by them. This assertion was verified in the manner of his death. Having the command of ranging party of about twenty men, in 1758, at a place called "Half-way brook," they were suddenly surrounded by Indians. Many of the party fell by the first fire; a few ran and escaped. Capt. Lawrence sprang to a tree, and shouted, "To cover, to cover, boys!" Being closely pressed on all sides, those who remained were soon all slain, except the gallant captain, and he was mortally wounded. He finally fell by the strokes of a number of the enemy. His body, when found, was in a horribly mangled state.

Sympathizing with their minister in the ardor and zeal he felt in the contention between the colonies and the British ministry, previous to the commencement of hostilities, the inhabitants of Pepperell were among the first to notice the unconstitutional arbitrary acts of Parliament, which led to the separation of the colonies from the mother country; among the first to express emphatically their opinion in relation to those acts; and among the first forcibly to defend what they deemed their rights and privileges. Perhaps some of the following extracts from the district and town records were penned by Mr. Emerson.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, 1765, the district voted to give the following instructions to their representative in the General Court, for his conduct in this important crisis.

To Abel Lawrence, Esq.,

Taking into consideration the measures that have been adopted by the British ministry, and acts of parliament made, which press hard upon our invaluable rights and privileges, by the royal charter granted to the first settlers of this province, the power of making laws and levying taxes invested in the General Assembly. It is certain we were not represented in Parliament, neither were the

remonstrance's sent by this province admitted there, when the late act, called the stamp act, by which an insupportable and unconstitutional tax is laid on the colonies, was made. We, therefore, think it our indispensable duty to desire you by no means to join in any measures for countenancing or assisting in the execution of the said stamp act. Furthermore, as the trade of this province is greatly obstructed, and the people labor under an almost insupportable debt, we expect you will use your utmost endeavors, in the General Assembly, that the monies of the province drawn from the individuals, may not be applied to any other uses, under any pretence whatever, than what is evidently intended in the act for supplying the province treasury.

January 24, 1766, Mr. Emerson preached a thanksgiving sermon on the repeal of the stamp act.

In 1768, the district chose William Prescott a committee to join the committees from the several towns in this province.

In 1772, the following article was inserted in a warrant for a district meeting.

To see if the district are so generally inspired with true patriotic spirit, as to propose any method in order to retrieve and recover the constitutional liberties that have been extorted from us, contrary to the royal charter, and in order to prevent any further unjust taxes, tonnage, poundage and the like, and act thereupon as shall be thought proper, and most conducive to the happiness of all the true sons of liberty, and to American subjects in general.

At a district meeting held January 15, 1773, "chose a committee of nine men to consider what is proper for this district to do, at this alarming time, respecting the encroachments that have been made upon our civil privileges;" which committee reported the following communication to the committee of correspondence, and also a letter of instructions to their representative, both of which follow.

To the Committee of Correspondence, Boston.

Gentlemen, You will be so good as to inform the town of Boston, that we have received their kind letter, together with the pamphlet setting forth our liberties as men, as Christians, as subjects, with the infringements which have been made upon them. Desire them to accept our hearty acknowledgements for their vigilance over our common interests, and remitting to us so particular accounts of the innovations made upon our charter privileges. Assure them we are greatly alarmed at the large strides, which have been made by the enemies of our excellent constitution, towards enslaving a people. We of this place are unanimous; no less than one hundred have signed a request to the selectmen to call a meeting, though we count but about one hundred and sixty families; and when met, the fullest meeting that was ever known on any occasion, and not a dissenting note or voice. We feel ourselves, we feel for our posterity, we feel for our brethren through the continent. We tremble at the thought of slavery, either civil or ecclesiastical, and are fully sensible of the near connection there is between civil and religious liberty; if we lose the former, the latter will not remain; our resentment, (not to say our indignation,) rises against them, let them be in what relation soever, who would dare invade our natural or constitutional rights. Tell our brethren at Boston, that we entirely agree with

them in their sentiments transmitted to us, both with respect to what are our rights, and those infringements which have been made upon them; and stand ready to co-operate with them in all measures warranted by the constitution, and the law of nature, for the recovery of those privileges which have been unreasonably and unconstitutionally wrested from us, and for the establishment and security of those we do enjoy. Offering up our unfeigned desires to the all-wise God, that he would, in this day of darkness, be a lamp to our feet, a light to our path, and graciously direct to those measures which may be effectual for this purpose.

To James Prescott, representative of the town of Groton, and the districts of Pepperell and Shirley.

Sir, We, his majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the freeholders and other inhabitants of the district of Pepperell, legally assembled, July 18, 1773, being ever ready to give due assistance and encouragement to government, in a constitutional way, at the same time greatly concerned that the rights and privileges of British subjects, (our birth-right and the richest inheritance left us by our fathers,) may be securely enjoyed by us and transmitted entire to our posterity, cannot but be greatly affected at the frequent innovations which have been made upon our happy constitution; the particulars of the encroachments made on our liberties we shall not at this time enumerate, but referring you to a pamphlet sent from Boston to every town in the province, which we think very justly states our rights, and the encroachments made upon them; we therefore, who are no small part of your constituents, do desire and expect, that you exert yourself in the Great and General Assembly to the utmost of your ability, for the regaining of such privileges as have been unjustly wrested from us, and establishing those we do enjoy. We trust that you will be ever watchful, that you be not induced by any means to consent to any vote or votes, in the Great and General Assembly, that may have a tendency to weaken our constitutional rights and privileges, or even in a like case to be made a precedent of, to the disadvantage of us and our posterity. Presenting the above instructions to your wise consideration, we wish, that you and all true friends to the English constitution, may be under the divine direction, that you may be led into the paths of truth, and never be driven aside from seeking the welfare of your country.

The district unanimously voted to accept these communications, and chose a committee to transmit them to their respective destinations.

February 1773, the district voted to add two casks of powder, and lead answerable, to their stock of ammunition.

June 27, 1774, the district passed the following preamble and resolutions, and voted to send a copy thereof to Boston.

Under a deep sense of distressing and very extraordinary circumstances we of this land are unhappily brought into, (as we think) a bad ministry in our parent country, by the innovations already made in our civil liberties, and what seems to be further threatened, we are with concern of opinion, that it behooves us and all this province, and all North America, to set up a general correspondence