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Richard Bourne.



ORDINATION OF RICHARD BOURNE BY JOHN ELIOT AND JOHN COTTON,
MASHPEE, 1670.

RICHARD BOURNE,
MISSIONARY TO THE MASHPEE INDIANS.

BY

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RICHARD BOURNE,
MISSIONARY TO THE MASHPEE INDIANS.

IN January, 1634, there appeared on a list of passengers bound for St. Christopher and the Barbadoes the name of "Richard Borne," at that time a young man twenty-four years old.* We know nothing of his ancestry. We do not even know from what part of England he came, although we would like to believe that he was connected with some of the prominent families bearing the same name in Lancaster.† On the passenger list was another of the same name, Thomas Borne, but we cannot even trace a relationship between the two men.

The plan for emigrating to the Barbadoes was later abandoned, for we find some of the passengers settled before long in Lynn. In 1637, many removed from this town to Cape Cod and founded the town of Sandwich.

Others from Duxbury and Plymouth soon joined the new settlement, among whom was Richard Bourne. Before long he became a man of prestige in the new settlement, for references to him abound in the Records of Plymouth Colony. Tradition asserts that he was a man of wealth. He served on many committees, and for several years was deputy to the Plymouth Court. He also served as a surveyor of highways, as a receiver of oil for Sandwich, as one of a committee to buy lands at Falmouth and Yarmouth from the Indians. The high esteem in which he was held is shown from the fact that on one occasion a woman was ordered to be whipped for speaking evil of him.‡

He was twice married; by his first wife, Bathsheba, daughter of Andrew Hallett, he had four sons: Job, Shearjashub, Elisha and Ezra. The first three left a numerous posterity; of the youngest, Ezra, however, nothing is known beyond the fact of his birth, in 1648, and he probably died young.

In 1677, he married at an advanced age, for a second wife, Mrs. Ruth Winslow.§

For many years Richard Bourne and Thomas Tupper carried on the religious exercises in Sandwich. Although having separate congregations, it was decided that, as there were so few to attend, it was not wise to have two services, but that the minister for the day should be the one having the larger congregation. The two congregations finally united under the administrations of a certain Mr. Smith.||

*Hotten's *Lists of Emigrants*. Of the one hundred and three passengers, only two were over forty years old. All the passengers were men.

†Several of the name had held positions of prominence. Sir John Bourne was Secretary of State under Queen Mary. His nephew Gilbert was bishop of Bath and Wells.

‡*Plymouth Records*, Vol. 3, p. 96. The execution was respited.

On one occasion he was fined for having in his possession three unringed pips. This is the nearest to a censure of him I have been able to find.

§Richard Bourne's love letters to Mrs. Winslow have been published in the *New England Magazine* for 1900, p. 113. After his death, she married for a third husband Elder John Chipman.

||*Mass. Historical Society Collections*, Vol. 3, p. 188.

Ever since his settlement in Sandwich, Mr. Bourne had always taken great interest in the Indians living in the vicinity. A few miles from Sandwich is a tract of land about ten miles long and five miles wide, the Mashpee Reservation, which had been reserved especially for these so-called "South Sea Indians." The original grant I have been unable to find, either in the State Archives or at Barnstable, but it is said to have been obtained through the efforts of Richard Bourne, after 1660. In 1672, this grant was confirmed before John Alden by Quachetasset.*

The ruling elders always endeavored to have the rights of these Indians protected. As early as 1658 we find an Indian complaining that horses belonging to certain inhabitants of Sandwich had eaten his corn. An order was forthwith issued that those owning the horses must give restitution.†

The first mention of Mashpee in connection with Bourne was in October, 1654, when he made a request for some land at Mashpee pond, together with ten acres of meadow.‡ The following July he was granted a right to the upland meadow at Mashpee pond "provided hee doe it with the consent of the Indians to whom it belongeth."§ On June 13, 1660, liberty was granted Richard Bourne and Thomas Tupper to look up lands for their accommodation towards the South Sea "and that then a competency wilbee graunted by Court." The following March he chose some lands above Sandwich and also a meadow in Mashpee. According to a deed dated May 17, 1661, the land bought in Sandwich cost him £15. It was purchased under order of October 2, 1660. June 4, 1661, when the deed was confirmed, it was stated that the Court also granted Mr. Bourne a parcel of meadow at Mashpee, one half to belong to him and his heirs forever—the other half to be used by him until the Court object.||

From this time on, the life of Richard Bourne was closely allied to that of the Mashpee Indians. For carrying on his evangelical work he received a certain compensation from the Corporation for Propagating the Gospel in New England, a corporation established in London, doubtless largely through the influence of Edward Winslow, at that time acting as agent for the Plymouth Colony in London.¶ This Company, which had been established in 1649, bore the name "The President and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England." It consisted of a president, treasurer, and fourteen assistants. The £12,000 collected in England and Wales was spent in purchasing landed property at Eriswell, Suffolk,** and a farm at Plumstead, Kent; also, property in London.†† The rents received were to be paid through the treasurer of the Commissioners of the United Colonies in New England to missionaries among the Indians. The Corporation also paid for publishing the Indian Bible and religious tracts, besides erecting necessary mission houses. The church at Mashpee was paid for in this way.

* *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol. 6, p. 159.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 132.

‡ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 68.

§ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 85.

|| *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 3.

¶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10. In 1659, Richard Bourne received £20; from 1661-63, £25 annually; 1664-66, £30 annually; in 1672, £35.

‡ *Mass. Historical Society Collections*, Vol. 1, p. 218.

John Eliot refers to Sandwich "Where my beloved brother, Mr. Bourne, is a faithful and prudent labourer and a good man." The following statement is written below: "To Mr. Richard Bourne in Plymouth Collonie £30."

** Sold in 1869 to Maharajah Duleep Singh.

†† William M. Venning. *Origin of the New England Company*.

With the Restoration, in 1660, the Corporation became defunct for a short time, but a new charter was obtained the following year under the name of "The Company for Propagation of the Gospell in New England, and the Parts adjacent in America." The company was limited to forty-five members, the first forty-five being named in the charter. Among these members were to be found both Dissenters and Churchmen.* Robert Boyle, son of the Earl of Cork, was the first president, and proved a staunch friend to the Indian cause.† It may be interesting to know that this society is still in existence, and that Henry H. Edes, Esq., of Boston, has written an account of the Corporation, "which is often referred to by historical writers under many variants from its legal name," in the Transactions of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Vol. 6, pages 180-184).

Richard Bourne is first mentioned in connection with this Society in 1657, when it was stated that he and five others would probably receive a salary of £150.‡ The only direct information we have from Bourne himself is found in a letter written in 1674 to Daniel Gookin. He mentions different places on the Cape where "Praying Indians" were to be found, but dwells especially on those living at Mashpee. He makes a special plea for books, no doubt to carry on his educational work among the hundred or more children under his care. He goes on to state that among the Indians there was but one gathered church, "and ninety persons, baptized; besides yet in full communion, twenty-seven. For Englishmen that are employed in the work, that respects this account, there is only myself. Mr. John Cotton is employed in another part of the Colony."§ Four Indians were employed with him in carrying on this work, besides others called on from time to time. These assistants had not as yet received any salary from the honored Commissioners because of the miscarrying of his letter.

At the dedication of Richard Bourne's Indian church were present Governor Winslow, several of the magistrates, seven teaching elders, besides messengers from the different churches. It was estimated that there were five hundred persons in attendance. It was not long before Bourne petitioned the General Court to allow six Indians to have chief inspection, under his supervision, over the Reservation. He also asked that one of the number be appointed constable.|| Such rapid strides were made in the education of these Indians that a convention was held in 1666 at Mashpee to determine whether or not they were entitled to church membership. The Indians made their confession of faith, which met with the approval of the Governor, John Eliot, magistrates and ministers of Plymouth Colony.¶ Before committing themselves, they ordered the confession to be written out and sent to all the churches in the colony for their approbation. As no dissent was reported, the Indians were, in 1670, admitted into church fellowship,

* H. M. Bush. *A sketch of the Origin and Recent History of the New England Company.*

† "After the Revolution the New England Colonies were declared independent, so the Company could no longer carry on work there. In compliance with its charter, in 1786 it took up work in New Brunswick, which was carried on until 1804. That line of work proving unsuccessful, the Company in 1822 started missionary enterprises in British America." William M. Venning. *Origin of the New England Company.*

‡ *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol. 10, p. 189. "Richard Bourne, Mr Blindman, Mr Lenerich, Mr Newman, Mr Thompson. all these haue been Incouraged to the worke though noe certaine allowance bee stated on them but accordingly as they apply themselves see that wee know not but that the charge may amount to £150."

§ *1 Mass. Historical Society Collections*, Vol. 1, p. 198.

|| *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol. 4, p. 80.

¶ Cotton Mather. *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Vol. 1, p. 567.

under the ministrations of Mr. Bourne. The following extract is taken from the records of the First Church in Plymouth :

“ In this year, 70 ; Mr. Richard Bourne of Sandwich sent to the chh for messengers to take notice of the fitness of sundry Indians to gather into a chh at Mashpau. The Pastor, Elder and Secretary Morton were sent thither, Elders and messengers of many other chhs were there also, the Indians after confessions &c. were gathered into a chh, Mr. Bourne chosen and ordained their Pastor, all the chhs present approving thereof ; old Mr. Eliot and our Pastor (John Cotton) laid on hands.”

Their pastor must have won their respect and admiration, for in 1671 a declaration was drawn up by the Indians declaring that they would submit to the government and would promise to reveal any plots made against the colonies.

The date of death of this faithful missionary is uncertain, although the fact that letters of administration were granted to Shearjashub and Elisha Bourne in 1682 to administer their father's estate leads us to believe that it occurred about that time.

A copy of the settlement of his estate, and an inventory, may be found in the Probate Office in Barnstable. The children of his son Job, deceased, were to have the house and land he lived on (appraised at £300) and twenty acres of land lying at a place called “ ye great hollow ”—to be divided by the Court after the decease of his widow Ruth. The remainder of his estate was to go to his sons Elisha and Shearjashub. In the inventory his books are valued at £3. 10s. ; a servant boy at £8. ; cash at £18. 14s. ; moveables at £134. 6s. Debts due the estate from English persons amounted to £502. 5s. 4d. ; those due from several Indians to £173. 5s. 2d. ; uplands and meadows were appraised at £300. He is supposed to have been buried near his own house, in the vicinity of the present glass factory.*

An Indian, Simon Popmonet, was Richard Bourne's successor. Shearjashub succeeded his father in the Mashpee inheritance. He lived there and presided over the Indian affairs until his death. He did what he could to protect them from white men's cunning by aiding them to obtain a confirmation of the deed of their lands. This grant secured forever to the South Sea Indians the Mashpee Reservation, with the exception of the uplands and meadow formerly granted Richard Bourne. The part now transferred to his son Shearjashub comprised a tract in Mashpee with two islands—one half the fresh meadow at Mashpee bought for Bourne by John Alden, July 25, 1661 ; the upland containing thirty acres, given by the Indians to him March 9, 1672 ; also the other half of the meadow bought by Alden and sold to Shearjashub in 1684 as a site for a meetinghouse.*

Popmonet's successor, Joseph Bourne, grandson of Richard, was ordained their pastor in 1719, but resigned in 1742. He complained bitterly of the treatment the Indians had received. He was succeeded by an Indian preacher, Solomon Briant, who was in turn succeeded by Rev. Gideon Hawley.

Indian affairs did not prosper as years passed by. The white men living in the vicinity took advantage of them, carried off their wood, cut down their trees, and took possession of land belonging by right of the Reservation. The Indians were put under the guardianship of unsympathetic

* Some assert that the remains of his house can still be seen. *Freeman's History of Cape Cod*, Vol. 1, p. 679.

† *Plymouth Colony Records*, Vol. 6, p. 159-160.

commissioners, and had a minister forced upon them who took little interest in their welfare.* Finally, about 1835, through the assistance rendered them by William Apes, a Pequot Indian who had been taken into the tribe, the condition of Mashpee Indians was greatly improved. In 1870, Mashpee was made a township, and now has her own representatives and her own town officers.

* Rev. Phineas Fish, appointed by Harvard College and supported in part by the Williams Fund, a fund consisting of \$16,665.80, left to Harvard College in 1716 by an Englishman, Rev. Daniel Williams, the income from which was to be used in supporting a missionary to the Indians. Mr. Fish lived in Mashpee over twenty years. His congregation, however, appears to have chiefly been made up of a few negroes and white people living in the vicinity, as the Indians preferred to attend services held by one of their tribe known as "Blind Joe."

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