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WILLIAM WEST

OF

SCITUATE, R. I.

FARMER, SOLDIER, STATESMAN

By

GEORGE M. WEST

St. Andrews, Fla., June, 1919

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A. M. West



To My Great Grandsons

Whom I trust will study the past, as well as look into the future, and always remember that "People who take no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants."



P R E F A C E

My purpose in collecting data and putting forth this memoir of William West, of Scituate, R. I., is that a forgotten loyal citizen of that State may receive such recognition as his patriotic and zealous work entitles him to, and incidentally to complete an unwritten chapter of family history.

One cannot read of the many services rendered his State by William West without being surprised that there is no public record of his death, his burial place, or aside from the works of Beeman and Walker, of his life in Scituate.

This little memoir, though fragmentary and lacking in literary style, seeks to set forth all the facts that the author could discover relative to William West's life, and is issued with the hope that it will incite Rhode Island's historians and scholars to more fully investigate his history and complete the work here begun.

The writer has spent some twenty-five years in securing the facts herein set forth, having visited the West homestead in Scituate, searched the records there, and talked with some of the oldest Scituate inhabitants; carefully examined the Colonial Records of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, as well as their Vital Records and Town Histories; the records at Washington relative to Rhode Island in the Revolutionary War, and the Pension Records for that State in that war; examined the Census Records for the State for 1774 and 1790; looked through a large number of contemporary State newspapers; corresponded with all the descendants of William West that could be found, and obtained from them family records; read numerous books on early New England and Rhode Island history; and received much valuable information from J. N. Arnold, Rhode Island's historian; Miss Georgiana Guild, genealogist, of Providence; Byron O. Angell and Cyrus Walker, of Scituate, and C. S. Pierce, genealogist, of Springfield, Mass., to all of whom the thanks of the author are hereby extended.

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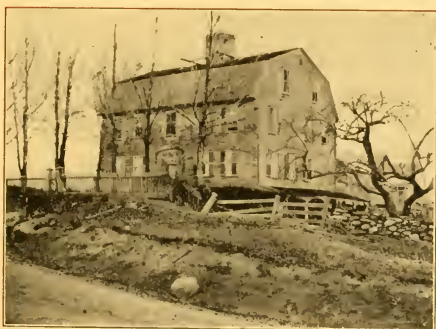
The silent influence of the primeval forests, and the everlasting granite hills that rise, terrace above terrace, from the wonderful bay that bisects Rhode Island, had much to do with the formation of the character of the early settlers of that State, knitting into their inmost fibre that stability and ruggedness for which they were noted.

While the yearning for a greater personal and religious liberty may have been the prevailing motive for the migration of many of these pioneers from the Massachusetts colonies, inseparable from it was that longing for the ownership of land which was their heritage from a long line of forbears in Old England, where the condition of the farmer and laborer forbade their acquiring the lands they worked, which were under the control of the Lords of the Manor, and the Monasteries.

Undoubtedly such were the impelling impulses that caused many of the descendants of Francis West,¹ of Duxbury, Mass., to remove to the western shores of Narragansett Bay, in Rhode Island, and westward along the Providence and Hartford pike, into Windham and Tolland counties, in Connecticut. But the emigrant remained at Duxbury throughout his life.

1. See Francis West, in Appendix.





View of the house from the south-east, showing the full story opening out on the lawn from the basement, also height of the attic story. Also the location of the building on the side hill, which is a granite rocky projection.



Peter West, the third son of Francis, resided at Duxbury, and cared for his father in his old age, and his father's estate, which amounted to but sixteen pounds and fifteen shillings, was given him by the Probate court.

Peter West had nine children,² all born in Duxbury. His first son, the fifth child, was named William. He was born May 4th, 1683. This son William was married in 1709 to Abiah Sprague, of Hingham, Mass. Either before his marriage, or soon after, he removed to North Kingston, R. I., where he probably resided the remainder of his life. The North Kingston records show that he and wife, Abiah, signed a deed to land on November 28th, 1711, and again in April, 1713. Other deeds made by William West about 1721 have no wife's name attached, and it is possible that Abiah had died previous to that date.

The descendants of Almy (West) Battey, a daughter of William West, Jr., state that Almy had told them that her grandmother's name was Sarah. There is a record in the North Kingston marriages of — West and Sarah Baker being married in 1731. This might have been William West, Sr., but the christian name is not legible, nor is there any proof that this was the Sarah he married, if he married a Sarah, as he might have married earlier than this date, and this statement handed down by the daughter Almy is the only evidence at hand of William West of Kingston marrying other than Abiah Sprague.

2. "Peter West, son of Francis, died Feb. 20th, 1720-21; married Patience —, who died May 8th, 1725, in Plympton, Mass. He lived in Duxbury, Mass., and inherited his father's estate. He also had a grant west of South River. Children born in Duxbury: Mary, Oct. 3rd, 1675 who died young; Margaret, born March 12th, 1678, married Jonathan Bryant of Plympton; Esther, born Sept. 20th, 1680; Ann, born Feb. 16th, 1682, married May 7th, 1705, to Elisha Curtis; William, born May 4th, 1683, married Abiah Sprague of Hingham; Mary, born Dec. 7th, 1685; Benjamin, born July 7th, 1688; Elisha, born March 2nd, 1693, married (first) Dec. 10th, 1718, Mary Bearse, (second) Martha —, lived in Kingston and Pembroke, Mass.; Samuel, born April 4th, 1697."—From Dr. Cornwall's article in N. E. H. & G. Register, and Winsor's "History of Duxbury."



Family records of various descendants of the family show that William West, Jr., of North Kingston, was the son of William West, son of Peter. But there are no records in North Kingston, or elsewhere in Rhode Island that give the least information as to the children of William West and Abiah Sprague, or of William West and a second wife, or of the birth of William West, of Scituate, of his marriage, or of the birth of his children.

The family record in the family of the writer states that William West, son of William, son of Peter, was born in North Kingston, and lived 83 years. As Beaman, on the authority of those who attended his funeral, states that he died about 1816, that would place his birth in North Kingston at about 1733, which is probably not far from the correct date.

He had evidently acquired land in North Kingston at an early date, as he afterwards sold land owned by him in that town, as is shown by deeds on record there. In fact William West was a large land owner, and owned lands in various parts of Connecticut as well as Rhode Island.

When he became financially embarrassed in 1785, he applied to the legislature, and was granted leave to carry on a lottery to dispose of some of his property, which was scheduled as being a farm of 200 acres at Point Judith, in South Kingston, with 20 acres of salt marsh near; one farm in Killingly, Conn., in Thompson parish, containing 400 acres; also 200 acres of timber land in Killingly, Conn.; 300 acres in the town of Lyndon, Conn.; 380 acres in the town of Weston, Conn.; and 450 acres in the town of Foster, R. I. There were also 60 cows, 8 oxen, 5 horses, and 100 sheep listed. Lands in this lottery did not include his home farm of 500 acres, but show seven other tracts containing 1,950 acres.³

3. Cyrus Walker, in Notes on Scituate.



This energetic, popular, and prosperous young man undoubtedly, as was the custom in that day, married young, perhaps between his nineteenth and twenty-first year. He married Elener Brown, possibly a daughter of Charles Brown, though there were many families bearing the name of Brown residing in North Kingston at that time, the census of 1774⁴ enumerating nine, nearly all of which included children over 16 years of age at that date.

The first authentic record we have of William West, Jr., is that he was licensed as an inn keeper in Scituate in 1758⁵, and that must have been about the time he came to that town from North Kingston, at which date he would have been about 25 years of age. This inn is said to have been on Chopmist hill, on the Brooklyn pike. There appears to have been a large movement of settlers into Scituate between the years 1755 and 1774, as the census shows but 1,813 inhabitants in the former year, and 3,601 in the latter, an increase of over 98 per cent in the 19 years. Possibly this was the date of the opening of Hope furnace, which would have brought in quite a few settlers.

On April 6th, 1759⁶, he bought a tract of land from Reuben Hopkins and Jonathan Aldrich, on the west side of Round Hill river (the Dolly Cole brook) near where it empties into the Ponaganset. Round Hill is the hill west of and adjoining Chopmist, and this tract must have been westerly on the pike, or near it, on which he was then living. This location is now in the Town of Foster.

In August of the same year he purchased a fifty acre right in common land from Richard Brown. This was followed by the purchase on February 19th, 1760, of thirty acres from William Wilkinson. This tract is described as follows: bounded on the north by land be-

4. See Census for 1774 and 1790 in Appendix.

5. Beaman's Historical Address, 1876, page 36.

6. Notes on Scituate, compiled by Cyrus Walker.

longing to the heirs of Joseph Wilkinson, on the east by land of John Hulet, on the south by land of Bernard Haile, and on the west by land belonging to the heirs of John Hopkins. This made three pieces of land that William West had bought in Scituate in less than a year.

On March 27th, 1761⁷, he purchased the tract that became his homestead, and which is known even today as the "Big House Farm." This tract consisted of 500 acres, and was purchased of John Hulet who describes the property as "the same farm on which William West now liveth," and "is all that farm that I, the said grantor, purchased of Capt. John Hopkins, and part of that lot of land that I, the said grantor, purchased of Richard Steere and Peter Cook."

The eastern part of this tract, some 200 acres, being the part that Hulet bought of Stephen Hopkins, was the 150 acres selected by Major William Hopkins, in May, 1705, and fifty acres that he selected soon after, probably at the second division of the Providence Proprietors, being the purchase right of Thomas Suckling.

As the deed from Hulet states that this is the "same farm on which William West now liveth," he must have removed from his Chopmist hill location to some point on this tract, previous to the date of the deed, which was March 27th, 1761.

He paid for this 500 acres forty thousand pounds in current bills of the colony, of the "Old Tenor," a price that Beeman says is "not to be accounted for, except we admit the great depreciation of the currency." At the same time John Hulet bought 230 acres in the same locality for which he paid but 1,800 Spanish milled dollars, or about \$8 per acre. Walker says of the transaction: "At first glance this strikes one as a fabulous price, but on further examination appears quite reasonable. Beeman's conjecture as to the depre-

7. Beeman, page 24. Walker's Notes on Scituate.



ciation of the paper currency was correct, as a little examination would have revealed to him. As fixed by statute the value of a Spanish milled dollar was, in 1761, equivalent to six pounds and ten shillings in the "Old Tenor" currency. With this light to guide us we find that the actual cost was \$6,153.85, or \$12.31 per acre."

With a house full of growing boys and girls and three slaves, William West during the next few years was busily engaged in opening up his farm, which included stock raising and the operation of a dairy, and marketing its products. He is said to have kept one hundred milch cows, besides numerous oxen, horses and sheep. Scituate was noted for a very fine breed of horses, equalling those for which, at later date, Vermont gained fame.

It was not unusual for him to take 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of cheese to Providence at one time⁸. This was done over the rocky, hilly roads, by ox-teams. The care of the milk from a hundred cows; the washing, carding, spinning, and weaving of the wool from his large flock of sheep, kept his many boys and girls busy, and there could have been but little idling amidst such surroundings. From the occupations that they followed when grown, it would appear that the boys remained farmers, and that the girls married farmers, all remaining true to their early training.

But it must not be taken for granted that it was "all work and no play" in their lives, or that there were no pleasures in such homes. Far from it. Almost every daughter had her favorite horse, and there was the best of hunting for the boys, gatherings at their own home and at those of other young people, with an occasional trip to Providence, twelve miles away. Nuts, apples, cider, pop-corn, and maple-sugar making in its

8. Beaman, page 26.



season, aided in entertaining their own household of children, as well as those of the neighbors. William West was not, so far as known, a member of any church, but was a man whom his neighbors honored, and who, through his liberality, both in politics and religion, acquired many friends.

Schools were unknown in the community at that date, and children acquired their education from their parents, or an occasional private tutor. It is probable that some one of the rooms in the big house was used as a school room, with a private teacher in charge during some months of the year, probably in the winter.

As an evidence of William West's popularity and the esteem in which he was held by his neighbors, he had been a resident of Scituate but two years when he was elected as Deputy from that township, (each country township being entitled to two Deputies in the Colonial Legislature) a position to which he was elected twelve times, as follows⁹: 1760, 1761, 1766, 1768, 1770, 1771, 1773, 1776, 1779, 1780, 1784 and 1785. He was also selected as the Moderator of the town of Scituate twice in 1765, elections being held semi-annually, and he held the office of justice of the peace in 1774, 1775 and 1776.

From 1760 until 1790 William West was intimately connected with the political and social life of Scituate and Rhode Island. To the many public offices he held no salary was attached, and from his activity throughout the Revolutionary period, it is evident that he served his country from patriotic motives alone, and when and wherever he could be of most service.

In 1775¹⁰ he built the "big house" on his home farm, a building that is still standing in a good state of

9. Beaman's list, appendix page 2; R. I. Colonial Records, Vols. 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

10. Beaman, page 25, says: "In 1775 he (William West) put up the largest and most showy house that had ever been erected in Scituate. Mr. Welcome Arnold, who died some twenty years ago, was at the raising of this

preservation, showing the choice quality of the material used and high grade of workmanship. The wrought nails with which the clapboards were nailed to oak studding are holding as tightly today as when they were first placed, illustrating well the difference between the wrought nails of that day and the machine-made product of the present.

The half-tones of the big house, presented herewith, give several views of this remarkable building. It was built after the then most improved style of country houses, with a gambrel roof, wide and ornamented front door, and framed with everlasting oak. Evidently William West had this house planned after the best styles in colonial architecture and no expense was spared in its erection.

It faces the south and, standing on a steep side hill house, and used often to speak of the great gathering and interest of the occasion. Liquors of all sorts were furnished, but while rum was very plentiful there was a choice kind of wine, of which the people were only permitted to take a little. This house is on the Providence and Hartford turnpike, (an error of Beeman's; it is on the Providence and Brooklyn pike.—Ed.) three miles west of the village of North Scituate. It is a gambrel-roofed house of two stories as it fronts the road, and of four stories on the end opening to the east, including the basement and the attic story. The rooms in the house are very spacious, and the attic seems as large as many meeting houses, it being all in one room. It was quite a museum, with old fashioned looms, spinning wheels, chests of drawers and other articles, when I saw it. A very interesting place is this house, built by Lieut. Gov. William West, coeval with our Centennial year; * * * I rather think that not a few rebels were quartered there at times in the Revolution, and seditious conversation indulged in, and even rebellion openly talked of, and schemes devised against the British troops and vessels. I don't see why that house, built on the premises where Gov. Hopkins and Commodore Esek Hopkins were born, should not be placarded, these centennial days, with the noble and patriotic words of Rhode Island statesmen and heroes as is the case today with the Old South Church in Boston. The old house was raised and built by patriotic men who knew how to handle the musket and the sword, and doubtless did, most of them, serve in the American army and navy. If the old folks have gone to their reward in heaven they have left a memorial of their day, in this edifice, and may it stand a century longer."





The front door, being a good illustration of the front doors of the best of the old Colonial homes. The entire work is still in a good state of preservation. The clapboards are those originally placed on the house in 1775.



or rocky projection, it has three full stories and a large attic on the east side, while showing but two stories in height on the front or south side. The attic is as large as a public hall, and when visited by the writer in 1911, it contained many old spinning wheels, looms, etc., reminders of bygone days.

One peculiar feature of the basement story on the east is that it is hewn out of the granite rocks on the west side, and one has but to step into a room on that side to draw water from the well, which is sunk in the rocks, and in which the water rises to near the level of the floor. On the north side of this basement is a circular hole dug in the rock, around which are steps leading down a short distance to the water, but just above the water are rows of shelves cut into the granite, on which, it is claimed, choice wines were stored.

The fire place in this basement is very wide and deep, and the crane is of such heavy iron that it would support a kettle three feet in diameter. Just what this large lower room, with its immense fire place was used for, is now mere conjecture. But fronting as it does upon the lower slope on the east side of the house, it would be very convenient for many household purposes.

The front door presents a study in colonial architecture that would be interesting if followed up, as it is but an example of many that may yet be found in the better class of old homes throughout the New England States. The sunburst effect over the door is one often met with; the pillars, however, are quite common. The side supports in imitation of stone, with arching and keystone, also, are rarely seen.

Like all old farm houses, there were various additions on the rear, probably used as wash rooms, for milk and cheese rooms, apple storage, wagon shed, and nearby the hen house and barns. Everything was close





The "Big House" erected by William West, 1775.



to the house, and all conveniently arranged to do the work with as few steps as possible.

This was the house in which this leading character of Scituate, and all Rhode Island, met his many political friends, planned with them for the activities of the Rhode Island forces, to secure means and material to carry on the war, and, it is rumored, joined hands with others in the fitting out of privateers. If the old building could speak, it could undoubtedly tell an interesting story of these meetings, and of many others where pleasure took the place of business, for William West was a sportsman as well as a statesman, and in those days Scituate was well stocked with bear, deer, squirrels, and other varieties of game, and it is stated that many prominent citizens used to visit that section to hunt, among which Beeman names Governor Fenner, James Aldrich, William West, Joseph Wilkinson, John Hulet, Richard Brown, and others. In view of the frequent visits of the governor and other prominent politicians to the neighborhood on these hunting trips, it may be concluded that when the hunt was over, the mistress of the big house, and her daughters, were promptly on hand to dispense its hospitality, and that many political schemes were then and there concocted.

The inns of that date were the centres at which the local, state and colonial news was gathered and disseminated. And that of William West undoubtedly was no exception. In fact from his rapid rise in authority in Scituate, he must have been, from the first, a leader in the community.

It has been stated that the War of the Revolution really began in 1763, and Rhode Island was one of the first colonies to actively object to the various oppressive acts of the Home Government in London. The citizens of Rhode Island have always claimed that the first offensive act of the patriotic colonists was the seizure



and destruction of the British revenue cutter *Gaspee*, in Narragansett bay, on June 10th, 1772. This daring deed was but an illustration of the sentiment and feeling in Rhode Island from 1768 until the outbreak of the war in 1774. A historian has characterized it as "the first bold, overt, organized stroke of the Revolution."

That William West was even then taking a prominent part in matters pertaining to the safety and protection of the colonies, is shown by his appointment in September, 1774¹¹, to serve on a "Committee of Correspondence" for the town of Scituate, to meet with the committees of the neighboring towns, and in September, 1774, he was chosen with others as a committee relative to the Boston blockade. For seven years, during the period from 1760 to 1773, inclusive, he had been the Deputy for Scituate, and was the Justice of the Peace for the town in 1774, therefore it would be quite in line with his public work that he should have been thus chosen.

From that time on until 1790, William West was one of the most distinguished men in public life in the state, especially representing his home town of Scituate. The numerous titles which he acquired during these years will, in themselves, give some idea of the work he was engaged in, and his standing in Scituate and throughout the state.

He was a Deputy for 12 years in the Colonial Legislature; a Moderator for the town; a Justice of the Peace; Colonel of the 3rd R. I. Regiment; Brigadier General of the Rhode Island Militia; Brigadier General of the Providence County Brigade; Member of the Council of War for the State; Deputy Governor; and one of the Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature,

11. R. I. Colonial Records, Vol. 7, page 283.



Court of Assize, and General Gaol Delivery. Besides these official positions, he was often chosen to head committees connected with the prosecution of the war, or appointed individually to carry out war measures¹².

The following extract from Beeman is an illustration of the work he was thus called upon to do, and exhibits the patriotic spirit of the town and the confidence of the citizens in Colonel West. It reads as follows: "At a Town Meeting held April 28th, 1777, it was Voted that Col. William West be appointed to use the utmost of his endeavors and abilities, by giving directions to his under-officers, as well as using his influence otherways, to raise soldiers by enlisting the number of men assigned to be raised in this town, by Act of Assembly aforesaid." On May 5th following, he was chosen chairman of a committee "to prepare and divide into classes the male inhabitants of the town, liable to bear arms,"¹³ seemingly somewhat of a selective conscription such as our Government adopted in raising the great National Army in 1917.

Numerous and important must have been the meetings held in the "big house," and the gatherings there in the wilds of Scituate undoubtedly included many of the statesmen and army and navy officers of the State. It was a prominent and well known building, the residence of one of the state's leaders, but twelve miles from Providence, in a community whose patriotism was above question, yet so secluded in the wilder-

12. For these and other appointments see Colonial Records of R. I. Vols. 7, 8, 9 and 10, Heitman's Historical Register of the Officers of the Continental Army, Beeman's Historical Address with Appendix, Walker's Notes on Scituate, Smith's Civil and Military List of R. I., and contemporary R. I. newspapers. The Colonial Records have many items relative to William West, almost too numerous to mention; for instance, Volume 8 has reference to him on pages 4, 94, 173, 174, 201, 209, 221, 224, 390, 493, 529, 544 and possibly others.

13. Beeman, page 27.

ness that it would be a most fitting meeting place for the "rebels," as the patriots were then called.

In the meantime his wife and children carried on the extensive farm work, did their part in preparing the wool and weaving the cloth from which they made blankets and garments for the Scituate troops and to clothe themselves, and silently co-operated in the great work that was to bring into the world a new nation. One or more of the boys volunteered early in the war, John, as shown by his pension record, having lived in Scituate when first called into service, the date not given.¹⁴ He further states that he enlisted in November, 1776, in Captain Stephen Kimball's company of R. I. Militia for one year. He was in the battle of Rhode Island in July, 1778, having enlisted in the spring of that year, for seven months, in Captain Jonathan Hopkins' company, Colonel Livingston's regiment from New York. There might have been other sons in the army, but of this there is no record.

Another reason for the patriot leaders' meeting at the home of General West, might have been that it was within seven or eight miles of Hope Furnace, where cannon and balls were being made for the army and navy. This furnace, like many others scattered about the country at an early day, secured its ore from nearby workings, and made various articles of rough ironware for the early settlers. But Hope Furnace was more than a mere melting pot; it made anchors, and bored out the cannot that were cast, so that they left there in a completed condition. Rufus Hopkins bought an interest in this furnace in 1766, and took charge of it. It must have furnished a goodly number of cannon, which were used not only in the army, but on the numerous privateers that were fitted out by Rnode Island citizens.

14. U. S. Pension Files, pension applied for 1832.

In the year 1775 the Governor appointed Eseck Hopkins as General in command of troops to be raised for the defense of the shores of Narragansett Bay, and Colonel West was appointed second in command.¹⁵ In October of that year he was appointed by the General Assembly on the Committee to procure muskets for the use of the Continental Army, and to enquire concerning cannon for the use of the Colony.¹⁶

The military history, and account of the positions held at this time by Colonel West are somewhat confused in the records handed down to us. Coincident with his appointment as second in command to General Hopkins is the statement, in the Colonial Records, that he was, in 1775, appointed Brigadier General of the Rhode Island Militia, and served until 1777. He resigned this position on January 20th, 1776, but this resignation does not appear to have been accepted until January, 1777, when, owing to there being two Brigadier Generals of the Rhode Island Militia to take command, he was dismissed from the service, and given a vote of thanks by the General Assembly. Information relative to this appointment is also found in Heitman's Historical Register of the Officers of the Continental Army.

In May, 1776, he was appointed Colonel of the 3rd Regiment of Providence County Militia,¹⁷ which position he appears to have held during the years 1776, 1777, and 1778. It is quite probable that the rank of Brigadier General of the Rhode Island Militia was more honorary than otherwise, and that his position as Colonel of the Providence County Regiment did not conflict with his higher rank as Brigadier General, and

15. Beaman, page 25.

16. R. I. Colonial Records, Vol. 7.

17. R. I. Colonial Records, Vols. 7 and 8, and Smith's Civil and Military List of R. I., Vol. 1.



which was abolished because there were two officers of the same grade, with work for but one. As the appointment by the Governor, in 1775, of Colonel West as second in command to Hopkins, does not appear to have carried with it any title, it is possible that this was a Brigadier General's position, as Hopkins is listed as a General, with West second in command.

However, these were not the only positions Colonel West was called upon to fill during the strenuous days of 1776. In February of that year he was appointed by the General Assembly on a committee for the town of Scituate to procure arms and accoutrements for the use of the Colony,¹⁸ and in December of the same year, with General Varnum, he was appointed by the General Assembly to assist Brigadier Francois Lellorquis DeMalmedy in the plans of the latter for fortifying the state.¹⁹ Beeman states that on January 12th, 1776, Governor (probably General) West sends an order from headquarters to Captain Knight for nine privates and a commissioned officer, for fatigue duty.

Page 467 of the Colonial Records, Vol. 7, for that year states that General West had arrested spies, etc., and states the action taken by the General Assembly relative thereto. In December, 1776, the General Assembly voted that Generals Varnum and West be requested to forward such works . . . and get men and supplies.

In April, 1777, he was appointed by the General Assembly for the town of Scituate, to advance £2,024 for bounties.²⁰ The same month he was appointed by the General Assembly to procure blankets from the town of Scituate for the use of the Continental troops.²¹

18. R. I. Colonial Records, Vol. 7.

19. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8.

20. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8, page 201.

21. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8.



In May of that year he was appointed Governor's Assistant,²² and during the same month, chairman of a committee for the town of Scituate to ascertain the number of effective soldiers wanting to complete the Continental battalion then being raised by the state.²³ He was also made the choice of the General Assembly for 7th Assistant in the House.²⁴

It will be noted that he was a Deputy in 1776, and in the appointments he received in that year he is referred to as Col. West, possibly from his having received the appointment of Colonel of the Third Rhode Island Regiment in May of that year. However, he was not a Deputy in 1777 or 1778, probably feeling that he had enough public duties to attend to without being a member of the legislature, with its two regular sessions a year, and frequently two additional ones. But he returned to the legislature again in 1779.

In 1778 the General Assembly granted £3,021.05 to Col. West as bounties to his regiment in the late expedition against Rhode Island,²⁵ it being a matter of record that General West's troops acted as reserves in that battle, and aided in covering the retreat. This is the only battle in which, as shown by the records, General West took part. His son John, who was also in this battle, speaks of his father, General West, in his affidavit asking for a pension, as one of the generals engaged therein.

Rhode Island seemed determined that he should be a brigadier general, for in May, 1779, in the officers chosen by the General Assembly, he was made Brigadier General of the Providence County Brigade.²⁶ This

22. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8.

23. Beaman, page 25.

24. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8, page 224.

25. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8, page 493.

26. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 8. Smith's List, Vol. 1.



was but a little time before the British evacuated Rhode Island, and probably when the state was organizing additional forces to meet the invaders.

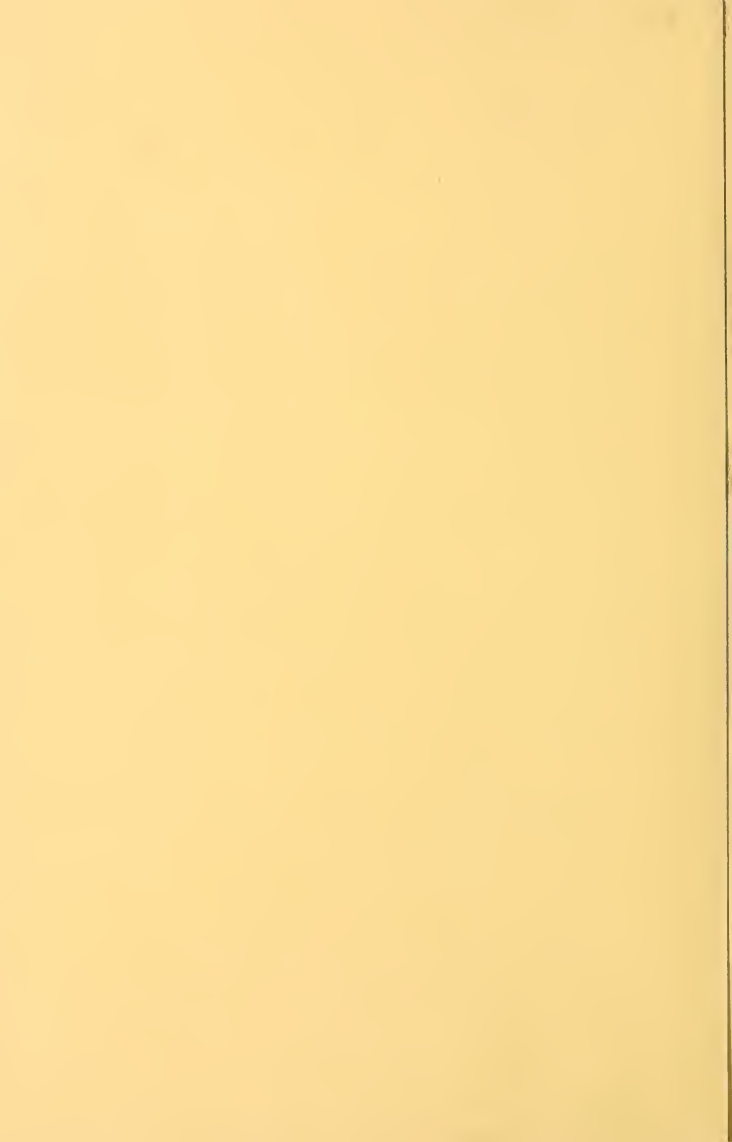
In May, ~~1779~~¹⁷⁸⁰, he was made a member of the Council of War of the state of Rhode Island,²⁷ and in the same month was elected Deputy Governor,²⁸ serving from May, 1780, until May, 1781. With the close of this term of office came prospects of peace, and General West's connection with military affairs in Rhode Island apparently ended, but he was chosen a Deputy for Scituate for the years 1784 and 1785. Later on we find him leading the country people, as against the cities, when matters came up which divided these classes, and it appears that the country people were victorious and carried their point.

But, like many another soldier and statesman who had given his time and money to his country's cause, he now found himself financially embarrassed, his farm neglected owing to his frequent enforced absences during the preceding six years, a currency that was worthless, having fallen from par, in 1776, to a point, in 1782, where it would not be accepted at all, and, as has been said by a prominent writer, "There are scarcely any evils or dangers, of a political nature, and springing from political and social causes, to which a free people can be exposed, which the people of the United States did not experience during that period."

Rhode Island suffered possibly more than other colonies because of her very poor financial system, and the emission of a large sum of paper money, which was never redeemed. As the financial stress became greater, the colony sought relief by issuing more paper money, thus adding fuel to the fire.

27. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 9.

28. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 9, page 52.



Such were the conditions that confronted William West upon his return to the quiet retreat of his Scituate farm at the close of the war. However, he did not give up, but with the indomitable courage that had made him a leading figure through the dark days of the Colonies, he set about retrieving his badly broken fortune.

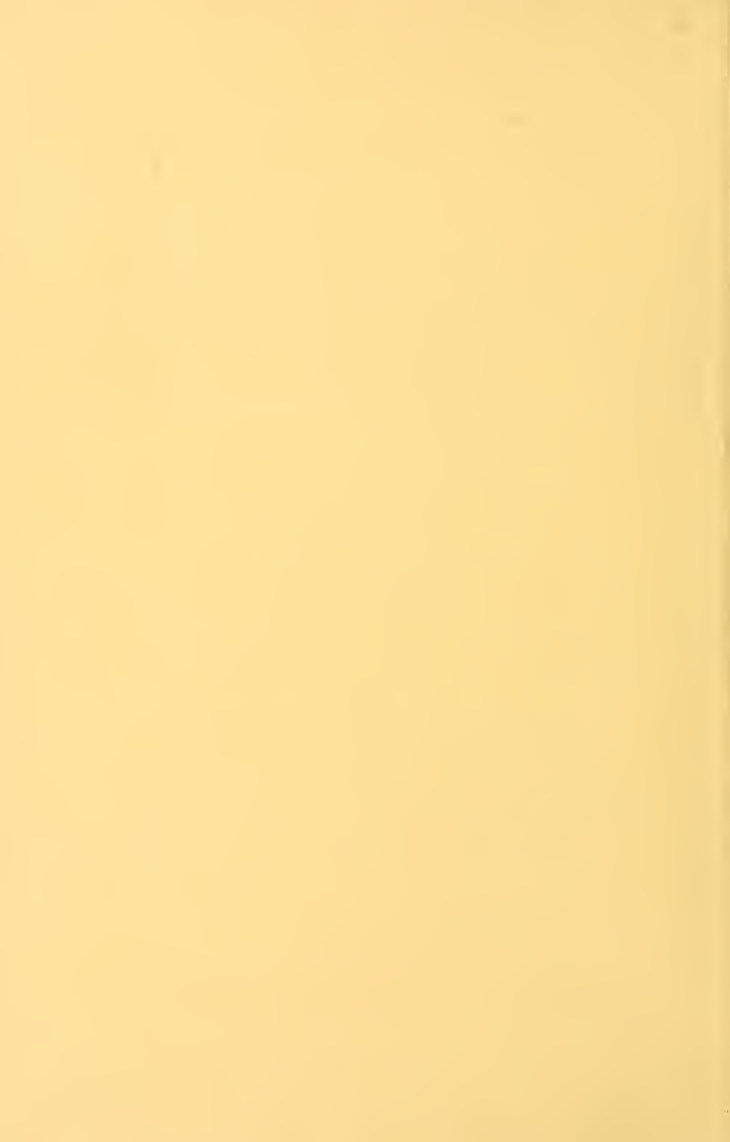
In 1785 he sought relief from pressing financial embarrassment through securing from the legislature the privilege of conducting a lottery for the disposal of lands and personal property.²⁹ Messrs. Caleb Harris, Thomas Holden, James Aldrich and Daniel Owen, all prominent citizens, were appointed managers of this lottery. Such lotteries were quite common in that day, and were frequently authorized by the legislature. As has been stated in another portion of this memoir, some 1,950 acres of land, with cows, horses, oxen and sheep, were disposed of in this lottery.

There are traditions in Rhode Island that William West was also interested in privateering, which was one of the most lucrative businesses of that maritime colony, relative to which it is stated that in less than five months in 1776, there were commissioned from Rhode Island sixty-five privateers. Fortunes were often made on one trip of these vessels, but again fortunes were lost with the loss of the vessels and cargo, and it is stated in the tradition connecting William West with this business, that he lost two vessels with cargoes, which still further damaged him financially.

But Rhode Island was not yet through with the public services of William West. He was elected as one of the Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize, and General Gaol Delivery, and served during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789.³⁰ This

29. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 10, and Walker's Notes on Scituate.

30. R. I. Col. Records, Vol. 10



closed his public career, and from thence on William West's life was one filled with disappointments and failures.

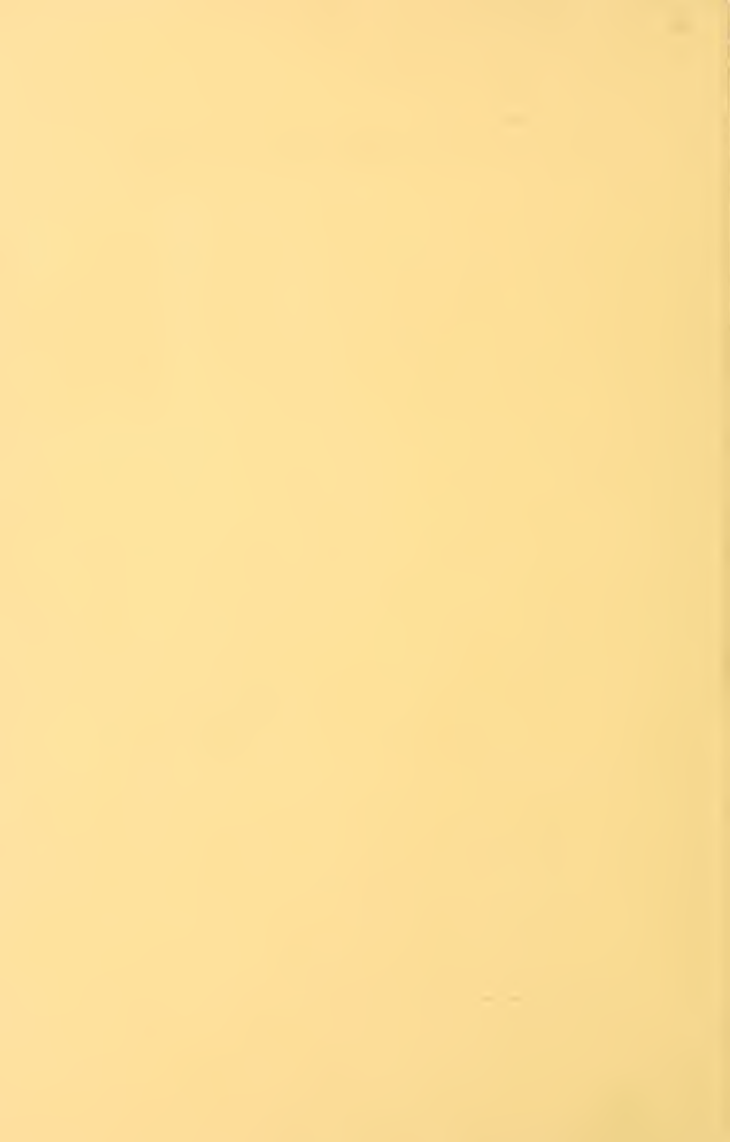
He could not recover the ground lost through depreciation of the currency and his absence from his farm and business, and by 1792 his affairs had become so involved that he was forced to sell his home farm, which was done on July 19th, 1792, to his four sons-in-law, Jeremy Phillips of Gloucester, Job Randall and Gideon Smith of Scituate, and Joseph Baltey of Warwick, taking from them a bond of defeasance.³¹ At the time this sale was made, certain claims were being pressed against General West which he contended were unjust, and which he stated that he would never pay.

This bond was never redeemed. It was transferred by General West on the 10th of March, 1801, to Job Randall, who was given in that transfer an unlimited power of attorney to transact all business connected with the property as though it were his own.³² From a reading of this bond it will be seen that there was then an execution in force against William West for the sum of \$1,360, in favor of Benjamin Talbot, and that there were also various notes due and payable to William West, which the parties to the bond agreed to collect, being secured for any expenses they might incur in so doing by this bond of defeasance.

This bond and its subsequent assignment, though executed in 1792 and 1801 respectively, were not recorded until June 21st, 1809. It is stated by some of William West's descendants that he never realized anything further from this property, which naturally engendered hard feelings. His sons and daughters had by this time married, and lived in homes of their own,

31. See Bond of Defeasance in Appendix.

32. See Transfer of Bond of Defeasance in Appendix.



and William West, now over seventy years of age, broken in fortune and deserted by friends, passed the remainder of his days in poverty.

At one time he was incarcerated in the Providence jail for some time for debt, imprisonment for debt being a common thing in those days. He said that the claims against him were unjust and that he would die in jail before he would pay them. Mary West, daughter of Samuel, son of General West, who married Peleg Angell, stated that she rode to Providence regularly each week to visit her grandfather while he was in jail, carrying things to him.

Just when he was released, or how, is not ascertainable. However, he passed his last days at the residence of his son Samuel, and the daughter Mary, above spoken of, states that she cared for him during his last illness. This son Samuel lived on a north and south road which is, in a direct line, about two miles from the big house. This north and south road crosses the Brooklyn pike on Chopmist hill, and by this road it is about three miles and a half from the General West homestead to that of his son Samuel. The old house of the latter was torn down some years ago.

Just when William West died is not known. Beeman stated, in his address in 1876,³³ that "it occurred about 60 years ago," and that Elder Westcott attended the funeral. This would make the date about 1816. According to the statements of relatives who attended the funeral, his grand daughter Mary West being among them, he was buried at a point near his old home, where there are three unidentified graves, said to be those of William West, his wife, and a son. This spot is diagonally opposite from the big house in a southwesterly direction, on a little eminence that appears to have been used as a family burial place, and

33. Beeman, page 26. Walker's Notes on Scituate.



which includes the grave of at least one other person. There is naught but rough pieces of granite, standing at the head and foot of these three graves, to mark them. And there are none but similar field stones to mark the last resting place of William Hopkins and his wife, Ruth, the father and mother of Stephen Hopkins.

Of the personal appearance of William West, Beman says: "He was a man rather above the middle height, a bony sinew man, long favored, with a prominent nose." The prominent nose, the so-called West nose, has been a characteristic feature of many of his descendants.

William West was a man of great activity and energy, of a generous and friendly disposition, and a leader among men. Though a sportsman as well as statesman, he was neither dissolute or dissipated, but such a man as his neighbors and the citizens of the state often honored by placing in positions of consequence. His associates in public life were of the governing classes, and he ranked high among them, as is shown by the many positions of trust and importance that he was so often called upon to fill. He was an indefatigable worker, strong for the right as he saw it, willing to sacrifice self for the public good, a man of many sides, and one of those "thousand Caesars, whose labors for their country scarce outlive them half a year."



The big house from the south-west, taken from the burial ground on the south side of the road, so as to show the three graves with field stones at their heads, these being the three stones in the immediate foreground, at the left, middle and right

APPENDIX

FRANCIS WEST.

(1) "Francis West, a house carpenter by trade, being a single man, invited by a Mr. Thomas, of Marshfield, Mass., left the town of Salisbury in England, and came to New England and settled in Duxbury, Mass., and married Margery Reeves, by whom he had five children, viz: Samuel, Thomas, Peter, Mary and Ruth." So wrote Judge Zebulon West (1707-1770), a great grandson of the emigrant, who probably learned these facts from his father, also named Francis (1669-1731), who lived with the emigrant in Duxbury until he grew up.

"Francis West married Margaret Reeves, in Duxbury, Feb. 27th, 1639, and died in that town Jan. 2nd, 1692, aged 86. He is spoken of as a carpenter in the Duxbury records, and the Plymouth colony records show that he made a pair of stocks for the town of Duxbury in 1640. In 1640 and 1642 he was a member of the Grand Jury; in 1642 he bought a house and land of Richard Beare for eighteen pounds, in Duxbury (Millbrook); and in 1643 he was on the list of those able to bear arms. He was admitted freeman in Plymouth colony in 1656. In 1658 he was a surveyor of highways in Duxbury; constable in 1661; and in 1662, '69, '74, '78, '80 and '81 was a member of the 'Grand Enquest.' His children, probably born in Duxbury, were Samuel, born in 1643; Dr. Thomas, born in 1646; Peter, date not given, probably about 1647-8; Mary, date not given, probably 1649-50; and Ruth, born in 1651." The above is taken from "Francis West of Duxbury, Mass., and Some of His Descendants," published in the April, 1906, New England Historical and Genealogical Register, by Edward F. Cornwall, M. D. This valuable article, however, touches upon but 23 of the numerous West families who trace their ancestry back to Francis West, of Duxbury.

Justin Winsor in his History of Duxbury, compiled from the old records, gives on page 22 a list of surveyors for Duxbury, among which are, for 1658, Francis West; for 1671, Samuel West; for 1674, 1677 and 1680, Peter West. On page 34 under the heading "Cedar Swamp" is the following: "This swamp was in what was called the 'Major's Purchase,' near Mattakesett ponds." October 14th, 1672, it was divided into seven lots which were distributed to proprietors. In lot 2, with Partridge, Delano, Alden and Soule, was Francis West. In 1671 Francis West and Samuel Seabury were appointed by the Court to look after excessive drinking in "ordinaries."

CENSUS OF 1774 AND OF 1790.

Below will be found a compilation of the census of 1774 and of 1790, so far as relates to the families of William West, of Scituate, and his son John, the great grandfather of the compiler hereof, G. M. West, together with other facts taken from said registrations throughout the state, bearing upon the West families.

CENSUS OF 1774.

This census was ordered at the session of the General Assembly of the "Governor and Company of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation, in North America, begun and holden in Newport on the first Wednesday in May, in the year 1774, and fourteenth of the reign of His most sacred Majesty George the Third, by the Grace of God King of Great Britain," which General Assembly further arranged the plan of the enumeration and appointed the enumerators.

Rufus Hopkins, who was the first child of Stephen Hopkins, was appointed to take the "account" in Scituate. He was 47 years old at that time.

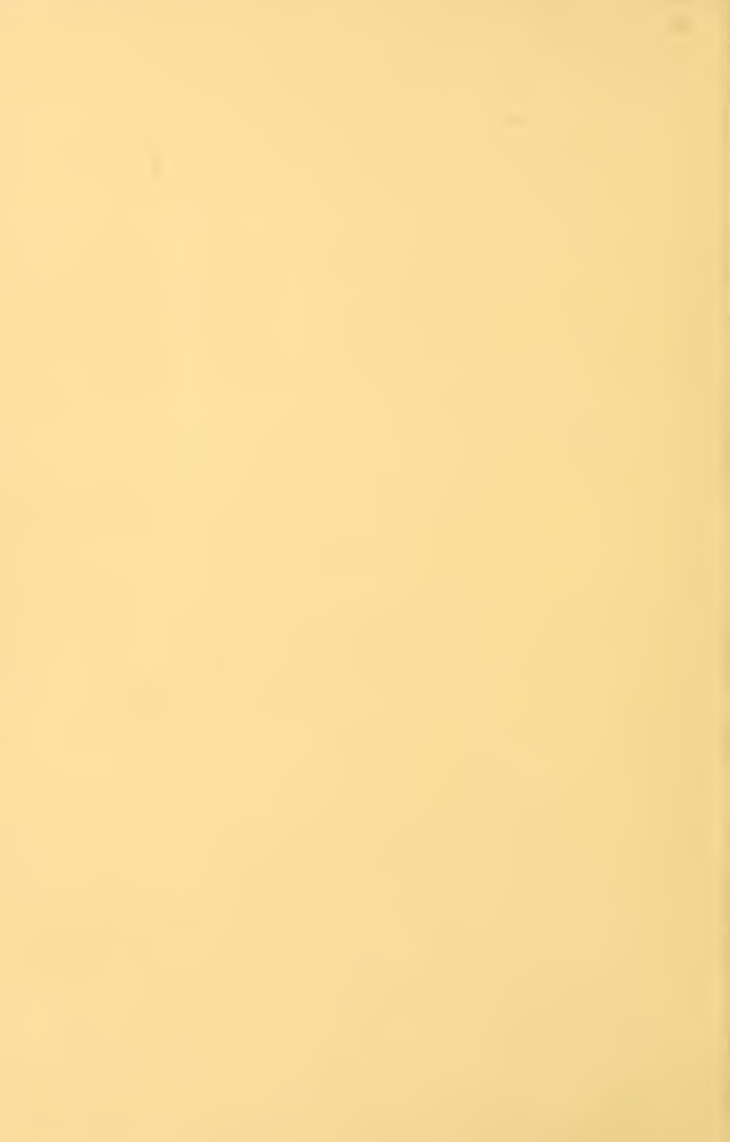
There were then but two West families in Scituate, William West, who lived a short distance west of his "Big House Farm," and John West, his son, who lived near him on the same highway. Both then dwelt on the east side of Chopmist Hill, on what is now known as the Brooklyn pike, the highway leading westward from North Scituate, over Chopmist Hill, and on to South Foster.

William West's family shows the following enumeration: Head of family, William West; males above 16 years of age, including the head of the family, 4; males under 16, 3; females above 16, including wife, 3; females under 16, 4; slaves 2; total 16.

As William West came from North Kingston to Scituate about 1758, sixteen years before this enumeration, and as there were 3 boys and 4 girls under 16 in 1774, it would go to show that these 7 children were born in Scituate, and the others in North Kingston.

This census, taken the year before William West erected the big house, indicates that all his children and wife were then living at home, with the exception of his son John, who was living near his father.

John West's family is shown as follows: John West, head of family; no females above 16, which would indicate that his wife was dead, and that he was then a widower. Under 16 a boy



and girl are enumerated, making three in the family, father and two children. Family records show that his son Freeman was born in Scituate, May 27th, 1773.

The enumerator, as is the practice at the present day, appears to have followed along the highway, and in this manner William West was first reached, then his son John, who lived near him, and the list shows well known neighbors before and after passing these two families.

The census of 1774 shows twenty-three families of Wests in Rhode Island divided among the different counties and towns as follows: In Washington county, seven families, of which 2 were in the town of Hopkinton, 1 in Exeter, and 4 in Westerly; in Newport county, twelve families, 7 being in Newport, and 5 in Bristol; in Kent county, one, being in Warwick township; in Providence county, three families, 1 being in the town of Providence, and 2 in the town of Scituate.

CENSUS OF 1790.

There were thirty-five families of Wests enumerated in Rhode Island in the census of 1790, seven being in Scituate. This was an increase of twelve in the state, and of five in Scituate. Of five, four, and possibly all, were sons of William West.

In the William West neighborhood we find the following enumeration of Wests: Head of family, William West; two males above 16, including the head of the family; 1 male under 16; 6 females, including wife, ages not given; 1 other person and 3 slaves; a total of 13.

Samuel West, head of family, 1; 1 female over 16, probably wife; and one male under 16; total 3.

Hiram West, head of family; 2 females, ages not given; including head of family, total 3.

William West, Jr., head of family, and one more male above 16; 3 females, including head of family, and two males under 16; a total of 7.

Charles West, head of family; 1 female above 16, head of family, and one female under 16; a total of 3.

Thomas West, head of family; five females, one head of family, and 1 male under 16; a total of 7.

John West, head of family; 1 male above 16; 5 females under 16; 1 female, presumably wife, above 16, and four other females; a total of 12.

Whether this John West had remarried, possibly a widow with children, as family tradition credits him with having done in 1793, is not susceptible of proof by the census enumeration.

Nor is it known that Thomas West was a son of William West. Beeman, who is the sole authority for the number and names of William West's children, gives only the following: William, Charles, John, Samuel, Hiram, Elsie, Olive, Ellen, Sally and Hannah, ten in all. However, it is known that there was a daughter Almy, or Amy, and there may have been other children, as Beeman is not considered positive authority upon this point, and the census enumeration does not settle the matter.

Nor is the census absolute authority as to the wife and children. The enumeration included all who resided with the head of the family, and it was no unusual occurrence in that day for relatives of the husband or wife to be living with them. In fact history is filled with just such instances, William West, himself, having passed his last days with his son Samuel, while Francis West, the first of the family to land on the New England shores, lived with his son Peter during his old age.

BOND OF DEFEASANCE GIVEN WILLIAM WEST

Know all men by these presents that we, Jeremiah Phillips, Job Randall, Joseph Battey and Gideon Smith—said Phillips living in the town of Gloucester and Job Randall and Gideon Smith of Scituate, all three in the County of Providence, and Joseph Battey, of Warwick, in the County of Kent, all in the State of Rhode Island, and am holden and firmly bound and obliged unto William West, of Scituate, in the County of Providence, and State of Rhode Island, and yeoman, in the plain and full sum of three thousand five hundred dollars lawful silver money, the which sum we bind ourselves, our heirs, executors and assigns, firmly by these presents, sealed with our seals and dated this 19th day of July, in the year of our Lord, 1792. The condition of this obligation being such that, whereas, we, the said, Jeremiah, Job, Gideon and Joseph, the day and year abovesaid received a deed of bargain and sale of the said William West, of his, the said William West's homestead farm, containing five hundred acres of land, be thsame more or less, and is the same farm said West purchased of John Hulet. Nevertheless it is to be by these presents understood, that in case and upon condition that, if the said William West shall do well and indemnify and save himself, the said Jere-

miah, Job, Gideon and Joseph for all the money they shall or have advanced for the said West and for all the cost and trouble and expense they, the said Jeremiah, Job, Gideon and Joseph shall be put to in undertaking the said West's business, by settling one certain execution in favor of Benjamin Talbut amounting to thirteen hundred and sixty six dollars and nine pence and also for undertaking and receiving a number of notes and amounts against the following persons, to-wit:—against Peter Phillips of North Kingston, Stephen Smith of Bristol, John Smith of Johnston, Capt. DeWolf of Bristol, Benjamin Foster and four other notes in said Foster's hands, Reuben Hopkins of Scituate, Benjamin Joy of Conn., Ephriam Bowen of Providence.

Now be it hereby fully known, that if I, the said William West, his heirs, executors and administrators shall and do well and truly pay and save himself and fully indemnify the said Jeremiah, Job, Gideon and Joseph the money advanced as aforesaid, then in that case we the said Jeremiah, Job, Gideon and Joseph are by these presents held and do hereby promise and engage, for ourselves, our heirs, executors and administrators, to reconvey the abovesaid farm back unto the said William West, his heirs or assigns together with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging, in confirmation whereof of the within bond of defeasance we do hereunto set our hands and seals this 19th day of July in the year of our Lord 1792.

WILLIAM WEST,
JEREMIAH PHILLIPS,
JOB RANDALL,
GIDEON SMITH,
JOSEPH BATTEY

(Recorded June 21, 1809.—Book 11, Scituate Records.)

**TRANSFER OF BOND OF DEFEASANCE BY WILLIAM
WEST TO JOB RANDALL**

Whereas I, William West, on the 19th day of July, A. D. 1792, sold unto Jeremiah Phillips, Job Randall, Joseph Battey and Gideon Smith my homestead farm and gave them a warranty deed of the same and at the same time the said Jeremiah, Job, Gideon and Joseph gave me a bond of defeasance back respecting said deed, all of which will fully appear by having reference to said bond and deed, now I, the said William West, have sold, assigned and set over the above mentioned bond unto Job Randall

in the following manner, that is to say:— Know all men by these presents, I, William West, of Scituate in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode Island, for and in consideration of the sum of one thousand dollars to me in hand paid by Job Randall of Scituate in the county and state aforesaid, the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge and hereby bargain, sell, assign, transfer and set over to the said Job Randall, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns the above mentioned bond and all sum and sums of money due, or to grow due thereon, with all my right, title and interest therein and in and to the lands or real estate therein described, to have and to hold the same to him, the said Job Randall, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, I hereby resigning and quitclaiming to him and them all my right, title and interest in the said lands, or real estate, and I, the said William West, do hereby constitute and appoint the said Job Randall my attorney irrevocably in the premises, with power to prosecute all necessary suits to final judgment, and the same at his pleasure to compromise, accomodate, arbitrate and discharge, and I do, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, covenant with the said Job Randall, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, that I will, on request, at any time hereafter make all such further covenants, conveyances and assurances to the said Job as may be necessary, or may be advised, for the completely conveying and assigning to him all my right, title and interest in said bond or said real estate, and that I will forever warrant, save and defend the present title of said bond against the lawful claims and demands of all persons claiming by, from, or under me and in confirmation whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 10th day of March, A. D. 1801.

WILLIAM WEST.

(Rec. Jan. 21, 1809.—Scit. Rec. Deeds, Bk. 11, p. 3.)

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Genealogists differ as to who was the father of General William West, and the line of descent from Francis West (1). In this memoir the author has followed Dr. Cornwall, and family records.

Miss Guild, of Providence, R. I., a very conscientious genealogist, differs in her views of this line of descent, and gives the following as the result of her investigation:

Beginning with Francis (1), of Duxbury, she lists the second generation as starting with a son Francis, rather than Peter, though Judge Zebulon West, the ^{great} grandson of Francis (1), names but three sons in the family, Samuel, Thomas and Peter, and two daughters.

Miss Guild claims that William West, who married Abiah Sprague, was the son of this Francis (2), and not the son of Peter (2), as is claimed by others. She asserts that this William West was born in North Kingston on May 31st, 1681. She names John West as the father of General William West, and states that this John West married Alice Sweet of North Kingston, March, 1730-31. Presumably, in following this line, John West would be the son of William West who married Abiah Sprague, though Miss Guild does not so state.

That the supposed eldest son of General William West, who was the author's great grandfather, was named John, is indicative proof of Miss Guild's claim, as family names are one of the strongest evidences in genealogical investigation. There is no proof as to order of birth of the children of General West. Beeman gave them as follows William, Charles, John, Samuel, Hiram, Elsie, Olive, Ellen, Hannah and Sally, ten in all, but without information as to the dates of birth of any. Miss Guild names eleven and places them as follows: Almy, William, Charles, John, Samuel, Hiram, Elsie, Eleanor, Sarah and Hannah, but gives no references as to recorded birth. Other records corroborate the number of children as being eleven or more. Ellen and Eleanor, and Sally and Sarah are probably variants of the same two names.

The half-tones in this work are from photographs taken by Mr. W. E. Coldwell; some obtained through the kindness of Mrs. B. W. Page, of North Scituate, R. I., and from other sources, all being taken between 1900 and 1905.





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