

Quincy History



Quincy, Massachusetts

Quincy Historical Society

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Moswetuset Hummock

Introduction

Three 1974 issues of the *Quincy Historical Society Newsletter*, predecessor of *QUINCY HISTORY*, issues 1-2, 1-3, 1-4 contained a paper on this subject by Dr. James R. Cameron, in three parts. This is a fine presentation of the historical records and writings relating to this very important historical site, and is well annotated. Dr. Cameron's story of Moswetuset Hummock is based on these sources. Subsequent research has added to our knowledge of this subject and permits more accurate interpretations and conclusions. Most important has been the research of Dr. George R. Horner, an ethno-archeologist who has made an extensive study of the Native American of this area. The story from earliest times is given in Dr. Horner's chapter in *SQUANTUM - in the State of Massachusetts*, published by Quincy Historical Society in 1992. Dr. Horner's contributions are reflected in the rewritten text that follows.

Few people visit this important historic site or appreciate its significance. It is hoped that this paper may contribute to a better understanding of its significance for us today.

Moswetuset Hummock was the seat of the Sachem of the Massachusetts Indians from whom the name of the Commonwealth was derived. It is the only significant cultural reminder of these early inhabitants of this area. A better understanding of the site therefore means a better understanding of the people as well.

Moswetuset Hummock is one of

NOTE - The records show many variations in the spelling of Indian names. The most common spellings will be used generally in this narrative.

the very few unchanged Indian sites in our region. Except for continuing changes in the growth of trees, it is essentially as it was when the Indians left it over three hundred and fifty years ago. The white man has always respected it for its historical significance. He has never used it for any purpose or made any changes to it. It has been recognized as a continuing historic site since 1637, making it by far the oldest recognized historic site in the Commonwealth. When one sets foot

on Moswetuset Hummock, he is truly stepping into the past.

The Massachusetts People

The Native Americans with whom we are concerned are known as the Third or Woodland People who came here some 2,500 years ago. They were Algonquins and the language they spoke was a dialect of Algonquian. They differed from the earlier peoples in two ways: They

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John Adams' Deeds To The Town Of Quincy, 1822

Introduction

Few people are familiar with the full text of the deeds by which John Adams established the Adams Temple and School Fund. This action by John Adams was a major factor in the building of the Stone Temple, and established Adams Academy, and has had important impact on Quincy's history.

The deeds give us an unusual insight into John Adams, the man; a small-town boy who rose to world fame but who never lost touch with the people of his town, and wished to share with them the benefits of his successes and experiences. From his experiences, he had a high regard for religion and a life-long commitment to education.

The rebuilding of the meeting house strengthened the Church as an influence in the community, and gave Quincy a landmark structure as its focal point.

The deeds show John Adams as truly the Father of the Adams Academy, far more than just its financial provider. They positively refute the persistent error that the school was founded under his will. By his establishment of the Adams Temple and School Fund, which continues today, John Adams gave

many Quincy boys the chance for a college education which greatly influenced their lives. Since the closing of the school, funds were provided to help the Quincy Public Schools, and currently are helping the Woodward School, the institution for Quincy girls that was inspired by John Adams' establishment of a school for Quincy boys. And today, as the headquarters of the Quincy Historical Society, the building that John Adams provided for his school again serves educational and historical purposes in John Adams' home town.

First Deed

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS -- That I, John Adams, of Quincy in the County of Norfolk, Esquire, in consideration of the veneration I feel for the residence of my ancestors and the place of my nativity, and of the habitual affection I bear to the inhabitants with whom I have so happily lived for more than eighty-six years -- and of my sincere desire to promote their happiness, and the instruction of their posterity in religion, morality, and all useful arts and sciences, by contributing all

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Moswetuset Hummock

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were not just food collectors but were food producers who had planting grounds where they cultivated crops. Secondly, they made pottery and used more refined tools and implements. Stone for these came from the Blue Hills quarries. Within a large federation there were family-related groups. The Massachusetts group was one of these. The head was a sakim or sachem. At the time colonization started here, the Sachem of the Massachusetts was Chicataubut. He, like the sachems before him, had a wife and family. The sachem also had other wives who were from other groups. These ties and others resulted in a kind of federation. The group under a sachem usually took its name from the place or area that they inhabited. They lived in small villages, moving seasonally from near the sea and their planting grounds and fishing, back into the hills and hunting.

The Massachusetts Indians took their name from Massachusett, "the great hills place", namely the Blue Hills. When John Smith visited here in 1614, it is estimated that the federation numbered four thousand or more. In 1616-1619, a plague wiped out about ninety percent of the Native Americans between the Saco River in Maine and Narraganset Bay. The cause is believed to have been a common European disease to which the Indians had no immunity, probably chicken pox.

Before the plague, Chicataubut had his seat at Passanageset Knoll, a piece of high ground in the Broad Meadows saltmarsh area of Town River Bay near Merrymount. It was generally back of the present Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on Sea Street. It has been excavated and removed for its gravel. Their planting grounds extended north on the flat land near the shore of Quincy Bay into Wollaston and North Quincy. After the plague had decimated the people of the little village, the Sachem moved away with the remnant of the group. When Thomas Morton came to the area some years later, he found bones of the people still lying in the houses where they had died, indicating that the Indians never returned there even to bury the dead. The Sachem's

followers may have been reduced to as few as fifty or sixty.

Moswetuset Hummock

Chicataubut moved his seat to Moswetuset Hummock. Like Passanageset Knoll it was surrounded by saltmarsh for protection from marauding animals and close to the sea for food. Nearby were their planting grounds, the Massachusetts Fields which now extended south toward Passanageset Knoll. The fact that it was close to Musquantum, now Squantum Park, a place of reverence to the Native Americans, might have influenced the decision to select this site.

The name Moswetuset means roughly *Place of the House of the Great Sachem*. Some records refer to it as Massachusetts Hummock or Massachusetts Hill. This must be interpreted as the hummock or hill of the Massachusetts. Josiah Cotton's Vocabulary of 1707/8 states that the name meant *Hill shaped like an Arrowhead*. This has persisted even though it is not correct in Algonquian and because the Native Americans did not name places in this manner.

The Indians on the Hummock would have lived in a very small village. The Sachem and his family would have lived in the great house. This would have been a structure about twenty feet in diameter with a frame of bent saplings covered with mats of bark and lined with hides. It was shaped somewhat like a very large igloo. The Sachem's other wives and their families would have lived in smaller but similar houses.

Moswetuset Hummock was probably abandoned shortly after Chicataubut's death in 1633, leaving it as a respected memorial to a person and to a Native American people important in our history. Chicataubut's heir and successor, Wampatuck or Josiah, did not have his seat here.

The historic hummock came into the possession of the Pope family along with much land in the area. It was conveyed in 1927 by Miss Alice C. Pope to Harold T. Dennison along with land for his airport. In 1930 Mr. Dennison conveyed Moswetuset Hummock to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, certainly the most appropriate owner to preserve a site

so important to its history.

What meetings or events took place here we do not know. There are many references to Chicataubut's headquarters as being here but no mention of specific activities.

It can be assumed that when Myles Standish visited Squantum in 1621, he did not go to nearby Moswetuset Hummock. Chicataubut had signed an agreement with the Pilgrims just five days earlier. Capt. Standish's mission was to make trade agreements with other sachems of the area. Gov. John Winthrop recorded in his journal several visits from Chicataubut "Sagamore of the Naponsett". He does not mention any return visits. In 1631, Thomas Dudley, Deputy Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, wrote that "Upon the river of Naponsett, near to the Massachusetts Fields, dwelleth Chicatabott, who hath between fifty and sixty subjects."

Historically, the William Wood map of 1634 shows the site, it is marked in a land map of the area in 1637. No physical landmarks are marked on the map. William Hubbard's history of 1681 tells of a great rendezvous of all the Massachusetts Indians at the seat of the great sagamore. Daniel Dean describes the site in detail in his history of 1720. Justin Winsor, John Stetson Barry and John Gotham Palfrey all mention the significance of Moswetuset Hummock.

This rich legacy from our historic past is now ours in trust. It is ours to preserve for future generations, and to benefit from a better understanding of an important part of our heritage that this relic of the past makes possible.

This rewritten text was compiled by H. Hobart Holly, Historian of the Quincy Historical Society, and edited by Dr. Cameron and Dr. Horner.

Quincy History

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John Adams' Deeds To The Town Of Quincy, 1822

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in my power to these purposes, do hereby give, grant, convey and confirm to the town of Quincy and their successors forever the two following tracts of land, viz, my Rocky Pasture, commonly known by the name of Red Cedar Pasture, or the Centre Rock Pasture, situate near the Grist Mill, and opposite the house of Deacon Elijah Veazie, containing twenty five acres more or less; — another tract of land, containing fifty four acres more or less, commonly known by the name of the Lane's Pasture, or the Mount Ararat Pasture, near the seat of the Hon. Thomas Greenleaf: To Have and to Hold, to the said town of Quincy and their successors forever, upon the conditions and provisos following: — *Provided first*, That the Selectmen of the town be authorized and empowered to employ a surveyor of respectable character for science and experience in the practice of surveying to survey both these lots, ascertain their boundaries and make an accurate plot of each of said tracts to be recorded in the town books within a reasonable time. *Provided Secondly*, That the rent of the herbage of these pastures, together with the profits arising from the sale of wood, fuel of any kind, timber and stone be strictly applied to the following purposes viz:—To be placed at interest in some solid public fund, either of the Commonwealth, or of the United States, and the interest again placed at interest, as it arises until the amount shall be sufficient with what the town may grant, other individuals subscribe, or the probable sale of pews produce, to raise a fund for the completing and furnishing of a Temple to be built of stone, to be taken from the premises for the Public Worship of God, and the public instruction in religion and morality, for the use of the Congregational Society in said town; and next after the completion of said Temple, that all the future rents, profits, and emoluments arising from said land, be applied to the support of a school for the teaching of the Greek and Latin languages (and any other language, arts, and sciences which a majority of the ministers, magistrates, lawyers and physicians inhabiting in the said town may advise. *Provided thirdly*, That

if there should be any gross corruption or mismanagement in the case of this interest, or any notorious negligence, or any waste knowingly permitted or connived at by the said Town, or by the Selectmen thereof, or by any other person acting under its sanction or authority, and the same shall appear by the judgement of a Jury under the direction of the Supreme Court the right to the property hereby conveyed shall be forfeited, and shall revert to the oldest male person at the time living among my posterity, and I do hereby request my Honorable friends, Thomas Greenleaf, Josiah Quincy, my son, Thomas Boylston Adams, Edward Miller, and George W. Beale, Esquire, to give their best advice to the Selectmen for the time being concerning the best mode of managing the said estate for the best interest of the town and for the advancement of the objects hereinbefore specified. And I do hereby constitute the said Greenleaf, Quincy, Adams, Miller and Beale, during their lives, to be a committee, with authority to appoint an agent annually, to superintend the lands, hereby conveyed, and whose duty it shall be to prosecute all trespasses of any kind whatsoever made thereupon, such agent to be paid for his services by the town such compensation as the Selectmen of said Town for the time being shall deem reasonable; and the said committee shall have authority forever as any vacancy shall occur in their number, by death or by resignation, to fill the same by an election to be made from among the most respectable, intelligent, and active inhabitants of said town. *Provided also*, That if the Episcopal Society of the said town shall at any time hereafter be about to build a church for the worship of God, they shall have liberty to take from the land hereby granted, as much stone as they may need to use in erecting such Church.

In Witness Whereof, I, the said John Adams, have hereunto set my hand and seal, this twenty-fifth day of June in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-two.

Signed Sealed and Delivered
(signed) John Adams

in the presence of

(Signed) Josiah Quincy
do William Smith Shaw
do Edward Phillips
do Josiah Quincy, Jun.

Norfolk SS. Quincy, 29 June, 1822. Then personally appeared the Honorable John Adams, and acknowledged the above instrument by him subscribed to be his free act and deed,

before me, Josiah Quincy
Justice of the Peace throughout
the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Dedham, 18 July, 1822. Received
and recorded with the Norfolk Deeds,
Book 64, Page 229.

Attest, James Foord, Register
True Copy, Attest, Mottram Vesey,
Town Clerk of the Town of Quincy

Second Deed

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That I, John Adams, of Quincy, in the County of Norfolk, Esquire, in consideration of the kindness with which my former conveyance, dated the twenty fifth of June 1822, has been accepted, and in further consideration of all the motives enumerated in that instrument, and various other causes not necessary to be stated particularly, do hereby give, grant and convey to the inhabitants of the town of Quincy, in their corporate capacity, and their successors forever, the following parcels of land, to wit: First, six acres of Cedar Swamp, in the town of Braintree, in the tract called Hubbard Swamp, which I bought of Capt. Benjamin Beale, Secondly, my Pasture, situated partly in Braintree and partly in Quincy, containing seventeen acres and a half, which I bought of Elkanah Thayer. Thirdly, two pieces of Cedar Swamp, situated in Gardiner's Swamp, so called, one of which I bought of Caleb Faxon, the other of William Thayer, which, when I bought them, I understood were in Quincy, but which, I now am informed, are in Braintree. These are all which I know or suspect to belong to me, but if any other morsel should be found to belong to me in that town, I give it to the town of Quincy. Fourthly, my pasture in Quincy, formerly known by the name of Babel Pasture, containing fifty one acres, more or less, which I bought

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John Adams' Deeds To The Town Of Quincy, 1822

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of the Hon. Cotton Tufts, as executor to the will of Norton Quincy, Esquire. Fifthly, eight acres of land in the town of Quincy, near the meeting house, bounded easterly on the county road, southerly on land of Lemuel Brackett, Esquire, westerly on my own land, as the fence now stands, northerly on my own land by a line to be drawn from the western boundary parallel to the line against Mr. Brackett, so as to include Mr. Hancock's ancient cellar and well: To Have and to Hold all the foregoing tracts and parcels of land to the inhabitants of the town of Quincy, and their successors forever, in their corporate capacities, upon the conditions following: *First*, Provided that plots be taken by skilful surveyors, and recorded in the town books, within a reasonable time. *Secondly*, Provided that these lands shall be managed and conducted upon the same principles, under the same conditions, restrictions, limitations, forfeiture, and supervisors, and the profits applied to the same ends and purposes, with those in the former deed. *Thirdly*, Provided that when the objects, mentioned in the former deed, are obtained, a stone School House shall be erected over the cellar which was under the house, anciently built by the Rev. Mr. John Hancock, the father of John Hancock, that great, generous, disinterested, bountiful benefactor of his country, once President of Congress, and afterwards Governor of this State, to whose great exertions and unlimited sacrifices this nation is so deeply indebted for her independence and present prosperity, who was born in this house; and which house was afterwards purchased and inhabited by the reverend, learned, ingenuous, and eloquent Lemuel Bryant, Pastor of this congregation; which house was afterward purchased and inhabited by an honorable friend of my younger years, Col. Josiah Quincy, and also inhabited by his son, Josiah Quincy jun. a friend of my riper years, a brother barrister at law, with whom I have been engaged in many arduous contests at the bar, who was as ardent a patriot as any of his age, and, next to James Otis, the greatest orator. *Fourthly*, That as soon as the funds will be sufficient, a school master

should be procured, learned in the Greek and Roman languages, and, if thought advisable, the Hebrew, not to make learned Hebricians, but to teach such young men as choose to learn it, the Hebrew Alphabet, the rudiments of the Hebrew Grammar, and the use of the Hebrew Grammar and Lexicon; that in after life they may pursue to study to what extent they please. But I hope the future masters will not think me too presumptuous, if I advise them to begin their lessons in Greek and Hebrew, by compelling their pupils to take their pens and write over and over again copies of the Greek and Hebrew Alphabets, in all their variety of characters, over and over again, until they are perfect masters of those alphabets and characters. This will be as good an exercise in chirography as any they can use, and will stamp those alphabets and characters upon their tender minds and vigorous memories so deeply that the impression will never wear out, and will enable them at any period of their future lives to study those languages to any extent with great ease.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty fifth day of July, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and twenty two.

JOHN ADAMS L.S.

Signed, sealed and delivered
in presence of
Jno. Davis,
I.P. Davis
Josiah Quincy
Josiah Quincy, Jun.

Norfolk ss. Quincy, 27 July, 1822.
Personally appeared the Honorable John Adams, and acknowledged the above instrument to be his free act and deed, the same being by him subscribed,

Before Josiah Quincy,
*Justice of the Peace
throughout the Commonwealth of
Massachusetts.*

Dedham, August 7, 1822.
Received and recorded with the Norfolk Deeds, Book 64, page 235.

Attest, James Foord, Register.

A true copy, *Attest, Mottram Vesey, Town Clerk of the town of Quincy.*

Acceptance Of The First Gift

At a meeting of the inhabitants of the town of Quincy, holden on the 8th day of July, A.D. 1822:

Voted, the Hon. Thomas Greenleaf, Moderator.

Voted, That the Town accept with gratitude, affection, and respect, the very liberal, valuable, and useful donation of the Hon. John Adams, with the restrictions and conditions expressed in the deed of conveyance, this day presented for their consideration.

Voted, That the Town will adopt all suitable and proper measures to carry into complete effect the enlarged and laudable views, and benevolent wishes and intentions, of the venerable donor.

Voted, That Daniel Greenleaf, Thomas Greenleaf, Edward Miller, John Whitney, George W. Beale, and George H. Apthorp, Esquires, be a committee to wait upon the Hon. Mr. Adams, and present the thanks of the Town to him, and assure him of the grateful sense they entertain of the honor conferred on them, by this mark of his esteem and affection, and attention to their future welfare and prosperity, and also to assure him, that, valuable as the donation is, and highly as they estimate the present and future advantages that will result from it, they regard it with sentiments of peculiar veneration, as the gift of one, whose patriotism and virtues have cast a lustre upon the place of his nativity; of one, who has so successfully devoted, for more than half a century, the energies of his mind, with his profound wisdom and learning, to the advancement of the best interest of his country; and to whom, under the smiles of Heaven, we are so largely indebted for our independence and prosperity as a nation, and for those free and well balanced constitutions of government, which alone can secure and perpetuate our inestimable privileges.