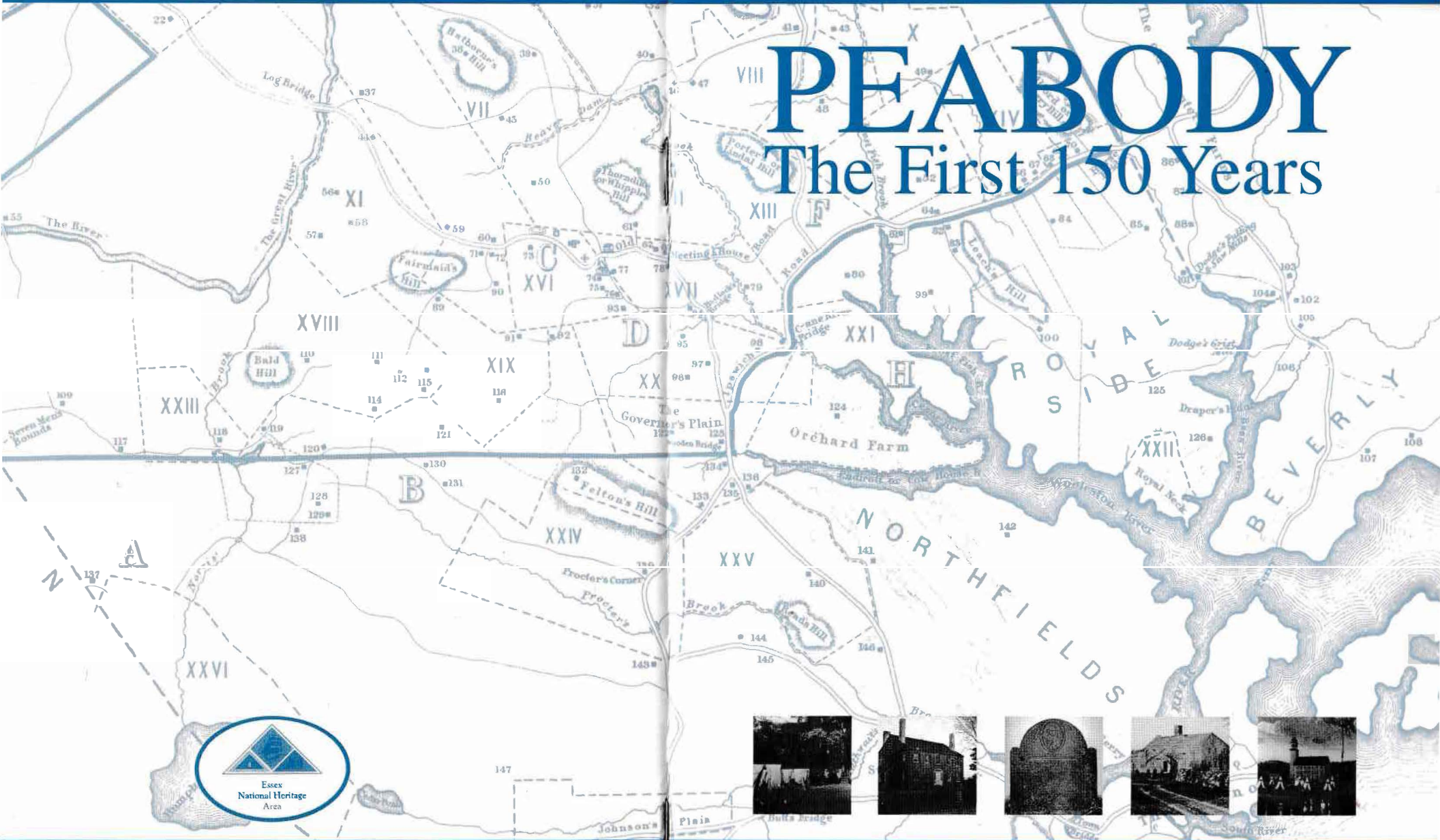


PEABODY

The First 150 Years



Published by
The Peabody Historical Society & Museum
35 Washington Street, Peabody, MA 01960
978-531-0805 / info@peabodyhistorical.org

An Historical Account Of Peabody's
Early Beginning As Salem and Danvers.

by Barbara A. Doucette



Preface

The Peabody Historical Society & Museum was founded in 1896 for the purpose of preserving and collecting items pertaining to the history of Peabody and its people.

As a volunteer at the Society, I have learned over the years that many people do not know that the early years of the city's history is that of Salem. Later it became part of Danvers history.

Because of these facts, much of the early historical record has not been associated with Peabody.

With this book, I hope to help the reader understand and seek more information about the significant role early settlers in Peabody played in the history of this area.

Barbara A. Doucette
November 2000

Early Settlement of the Land

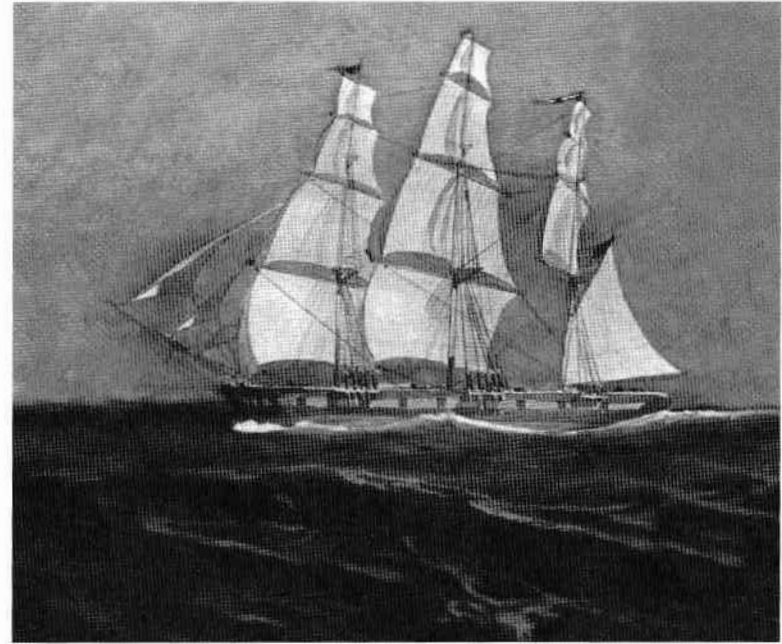
The history of the area now known as Peabody had its humble beginning in the 17th century. When first settled, it was part of the Town of Salem. The early history began in 1629 when a group of English emigrants, called Puritans, sailed to the Massachusetts Bay Colony under a royal grant, and settled in Salem.

Wilderness surrounded the coastal settlement in Salem. The abundance of trees was very useful for building their homes, necessary furniture, heating and cooking.

As more emigrants arrived in Salem, it became necessary to gain access to the area west and north of the town. This region was found to be excellent agricultural country.

Rivers played an important part in the development of the area. The North River extended from the Atlantic Ocean to where Peabody Square is today, and formed a pond. Access to the northern part of the village was made by the Wooleston River, later named Danvers River.

Through the early years, legal documents referred to Peabody today as Northfields, Brooksby Village or The Farms. Northfields were areas to the north of the original coastal settlement, the name Brooksby came from the many brooks that ran through the region and "The Farms" because of the abundant inland farms.



In 1629, Puritans sailed to the Bay Colony of Massachusetts under a royal grant and settled in Salem.

1629

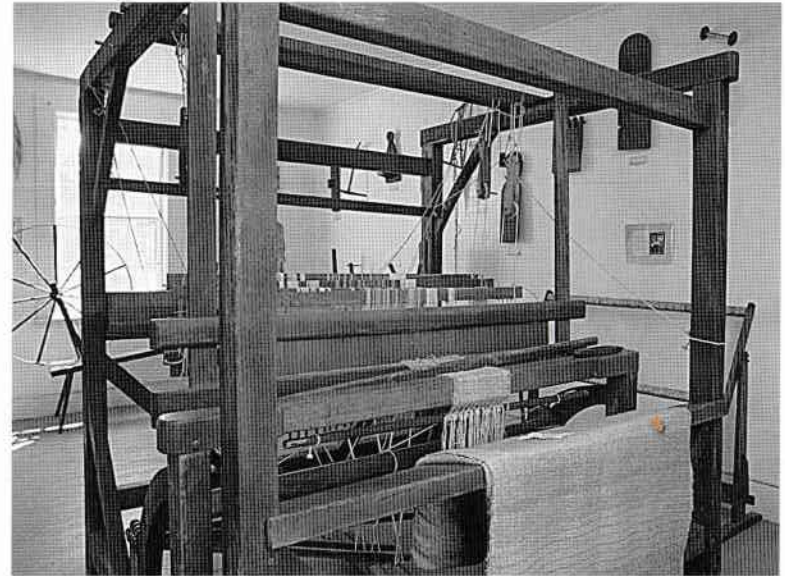
Emigrant Backgrounds

The majority of early emigrants were complete families from relatively prosperous middle class English society.

Adult males worked in a range of trades, such as woodworking, leather, manufacture of cloth and connected skills. Many were also farmers or made some part of their living in gardens or from more large-scale plantings.

Since many ships were small, yet carried many families, the emigrants were allowed to bring the most necessary items for their survival. Among these would be tools of their trade, tools for clearing the land and farming, food staples for one year, cooking vessels and limited clothing and bedding.

Much work had to be done to establish their new homes and country. When investigating the territory, they found it to be much like the country they had left, therefore, referring to it as New England.



The Mansfield loom was brought from England in 1640, now part of the Peabody Historical Society and Museum Collection.

1640

Division and Settlement of the New Lands

When planning the development of Salem, the Selectmen gave land grants for certain purposes, to ensure the well being of the settlers. The assignment of plots were given according to one's "quality", trade or social standing. These grants would range from 5 to 300 acres, depending on what the use would be.

As more emigrants, with a variety of trades, arrived in Salem, the Selectmen granted land to these tradesmen to establish their businesses. Most industry, in the early years, began in the area around the North River.

It is not known when the first settlers arrived in the area of Brooksby. In 1629 a grant of land in what is now called South Peabody, was given to Hugh Brown. Very soon after he had settled, he was removed to England because of religious disputes.

Prior to 1635, Capt. William Trask was granted 50 acres at the head of the North River. Here, at a point near today's Wallis Street, he built his first grist mill. This was the beginning of the first industry in Peabody.

Another large grant of 300 acres was given to Robert Cole by the selectmen, in 1635. This tract of land ran from the south side of the Old Ipswich Road (Lowell Street) and west. He sold it to Emanuel Downing in 1638. Downing was a judge and deputy of the General Court of Salem. Shortly after the purchase of this property, he built his first house in 1645, which was later destroyed by fire. He immediately re-built his home and other buildings to include a tavern.



Early tools used by tradesmen for construction were mostly made of wood.

1635

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1635

Mr. Downing was a very influential man. His son George, while living here, attended Harvard College, established in 1640. He was a member of the first graduating class in 1642. After spending his youth in "Salem" and upon graduation, he wished to travel and returned to England in 1646. He was instrumental in assisting the exiled King Charles II to return to the throne. In 1663 Downing was made a Baronet for his actions. Later he was appointed Chief Treasurer and given land in London. On this land a street was laid out and named Downing Street. Number 10 Downing Street has been the residence of the Prime Minister of England for many years.

In 1636, Eleanor Felton was granted 20 acres of land for herself and son, Nathaniel. They chose the area called Hog Hill. The name so called because it contained the old pound used to capture wild animals by the Indians. The settlers continued to use this space to protect domestic animals and to fatten the pigs.

After several years of clearing the land, Nathaniel Felton's home was completed in 1644. It was a two room, end chimney/house, later enlarged. This house, the oldest surviving of the early settlers, still stands in the area of Brooksby Farm and is the property of the Peabody Historical Society & Museum. Other Felton families built homes in this area as time went on. The name Hog Hill was then named Felton Hill, now known as Brooksby Farm.

The same year Colonel Thomas Reed was granted a large tract of land which included what is now a section of Route 114, from Wilson Square to Prospect Street and back, east along Lowell Street. A large part of this grant is now the site of the Northshore Mall.



In 1636 Eleanor Felton was granted 20 acres of land. Today the homestead still stands on Felton Street.

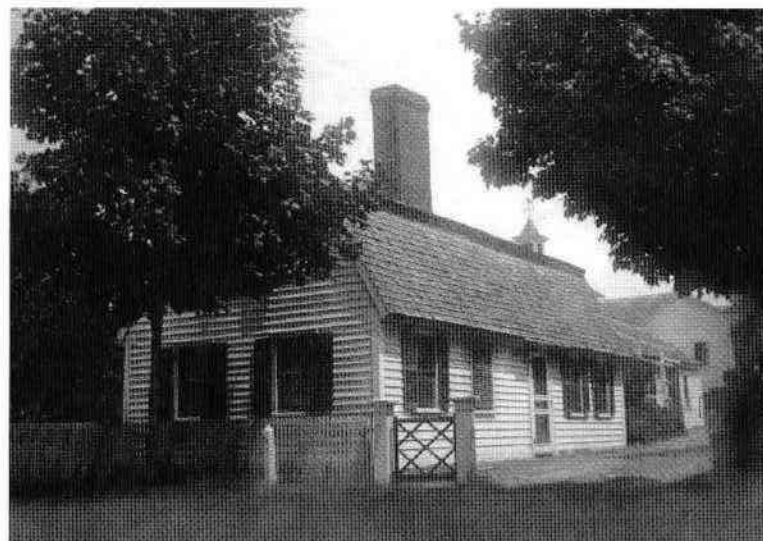
1636

As Brooksby became more settled, primary roads were laid out and named. From Salem town to the south section, toward Lynn, became "Old Boston Road", Central Street was called "Ye Common", Andover Street "Ye Country Road" Lowell Street "Ye Highway" and the road that ran from Lowell Street thru Salem Village to Ipswich named Old Ipswich Road. Few other roads were laid out, as seen on old maps, and those would not even be given names for many years.

The Buxton and Osborn families acquired land in the 1630's. Much of the section now known as Central Street, Wilson Square and Andover Street, was built upon by these two families. In the home of William Osborn, Nathaniel Bowditch, famous for his books on navigation, received his early education from Margaret and Patience Osborn. Bowditch lived in another Osborn house across the street.

As early as 1634, many large land grants were issued for the western section of Brooksby.

Anthony Needham arrived at Salem in 1651 and married Ann Potter in 1655. They were granted 200 acres of land to farm, in what is now known as West Peabody, in the vicinity of Route 95 and Lowell Street. Both he and his wife lived to their 80th year and are buried in the family cemetery near the old homestead. Ann Needham was beaten for her Quaker beliefs.



Nathaniel Bowditch, famous for his books on navigation received his education in the Wilson Square area.

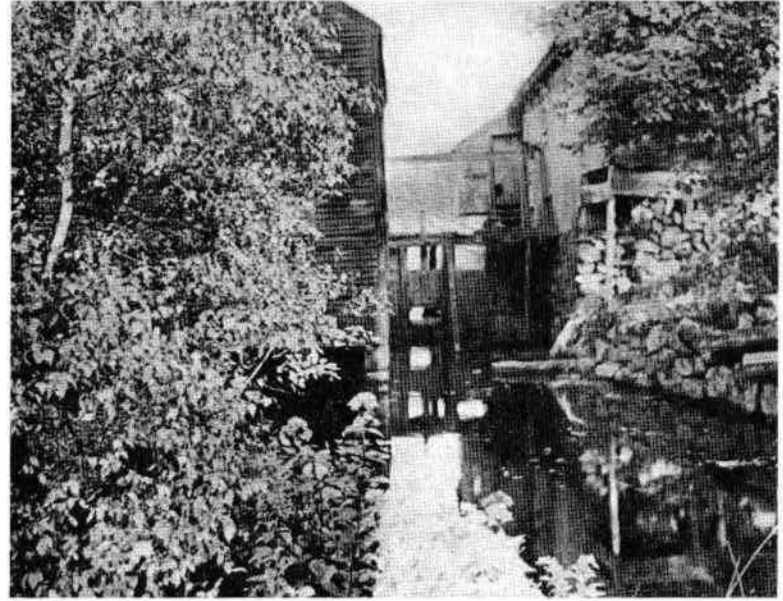
1650

In 1654, Nicholas and Henry Phelps inherited 100 acres of land and house near Crystal Lake, previously called Phelps Pond. The Phelps were Quakers and held religious meetings in their home. Nicholas Phelps was imposed heavy fines for this and resulted in losing his share of the property. Henry Phelps acquired full ownership and 1664 sold it to Joseph Pope. On this site, Joseph Pope built the first saw mill around 1670. The Popes were also sympathizers of the Quaker faith and were excommunicated from the First Church of Salem.

Because of better access to the area, more families from other communities were moving here. Giles Corey acquired 150 acres of land in the area of Phelps Pond, in 1660.

John Proctor moved from Ipswich and leased the Downing Farm and Tavern in 1666. Proctor was married three times and the father of seventeen children.

In 1672 the northeast section of Salem was separated from the town and named Salem Village. The people of that section wished to have their own meeting house so that they would not have to travel five miles or more to Salem for worship. They also were not happy with the taxes and church fees which they had to pay to the town.



Crystal Lake, once known as Phelps Pond, was the site that Joseph Pope built the first saw mill.

1670

Industry in the Early Town

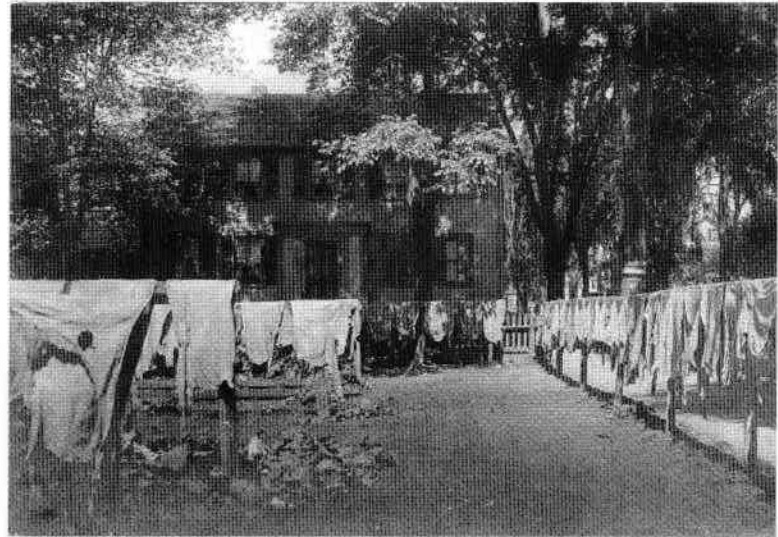
The leather industry, which later made Peabody world famous, began very early in the history of this city. The General Court was fully aware that the bark of trees and remains of animals slaughtered for food, would provide materials used in the production of leather. In 1639 the Court granted Philemon Dickerson land for tan pits and dressing of hides. Shortly after this Joseph Boyce, a Quaker, began tanning in the vicinity of the Old South Burying Ground. John Buxton was another early tanner, having 10 vats on Central Street, near Tremont Street.

It is believed that the first manufacture of glass in America began in Peabody. In 1638 a glasshouse was erected on Aborn Street. In 1640, John Conklin, a glassmaker, arrived and joined Ananais Conklin, Obadiah Holmes and Lawrence Southwick in the glass business. The business did not succeed and Mr. Holmes and Mr. Southwick left the company in 1642.

Close to this area, a soap factory was established in 1650. This business continued for almost a century.

In 1654, Capt. William Trask erected a Samp (Indian corn) Mortar Mill near his grist mill. The flow of water from the North River was essential for the operation of these mills. A corn mill continued on this site for many years. It was replaced in 1692, by John Trask, for a fulling mill. This type of mill was used in the process of shrinking cloth.

Industry began to flourish near the North River and the brooks running into it.



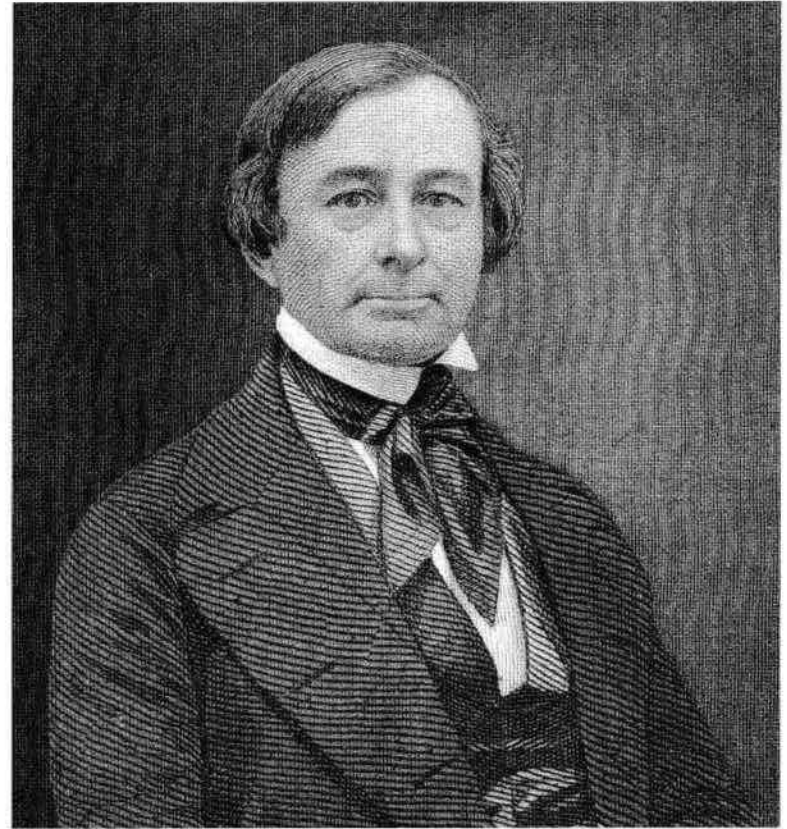
*The leather industry, which later made Peabody **World** famous, began very early in the history of this city.*

1639

In the later part of 1600, the King family acquired large pieces of property on "Ye Highway" (Lowell Street). Since several members of the family built homes in this section, it was later referred to as "The Kingdom". Over the years, the King family would have a large influence on the history of Peabody. The most significant was Daniel P. King, the first Congressman from Peabody, serving 1843-1850.

On the original tract of land, the King Family cemetery was laid out. The earliest member of the family buried there is Desire Jacobs King in 1799. She was the wife of Zachariah and grandmother of Daniel P. King.

Desire King was a unique woman. She opened a small shop in her home on Lowell Street, opposite Forest Street, to supply local and traveling people necessities. She left the affairs of the farm to her husband and took entire charge of the business. One phase of the business was the purchase of frozen hogs. Large quantities of hogs would be brought to her home and stored in almost every room during the winter. In spring they would be thawed, cut up and smoked, then packed for sale. Desire King was highly respected for her mercantile skills.



The King Family acquired such large pieces of property on Lowell Street it became known as "The Kingdom". Daniel P. King was Peabody's first Congressman.

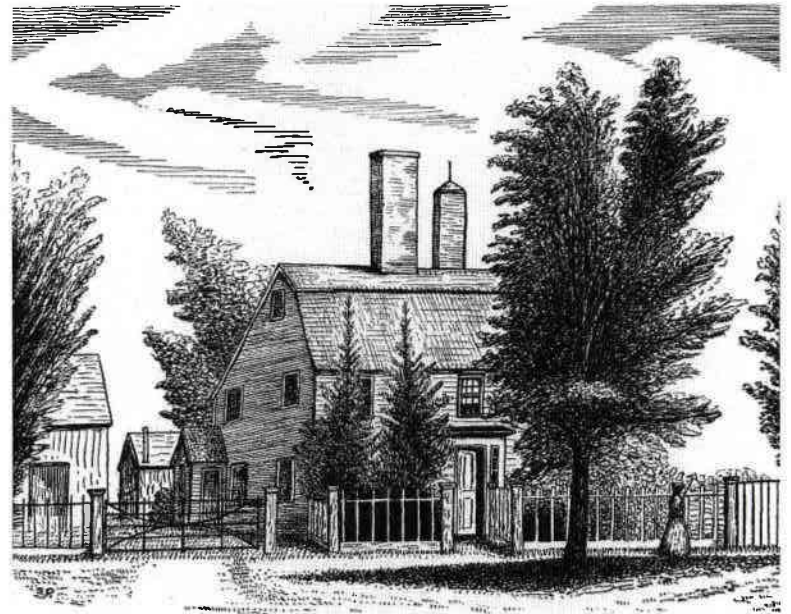
Religion and the Early Settlers

Religion was an important part of the lives of the settlers of Salem. The Puritans had fled England because of harassment for their beliefs, economic, social and political factors. Strict rules were laid out. Settlers were required to attend church services or were subject to fines, or forfeiture of their land, homes or personal property.

A new religious sect, named Quakers, was founded in England in 1648. It was not favored there and many families left for New England. Many of these Quakers or "Friends" settled in Salem Town and Brooksby.

Because of their beliefs, the Quakers refused to attend Puritan services. As more were arriving in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the General Court set up rulings for punishment of their behavior. They could be fined for each Puritan service they missed. The people who did not pay the fines were subject to beating or jailed. From 1658 to 1670 this persecution affected several of the families living in Brooksby.

The most notable of the Quaker families were Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick. Lawrence and his family were respected residents of Brooksby and entertained "Friends" frequently. They were fined and sent to prison in Boston. Lawrence was released after a short period but Cassandra was kept for seven weeks until paying a fine of forty shillings. In 1659, after the court found them still favoring their religion, according to law they were banished from Massachusetts along with their son Josiah, and Nicholas Phelps. The Southwicks sailed to Shelter Island in New York and died there the following year.



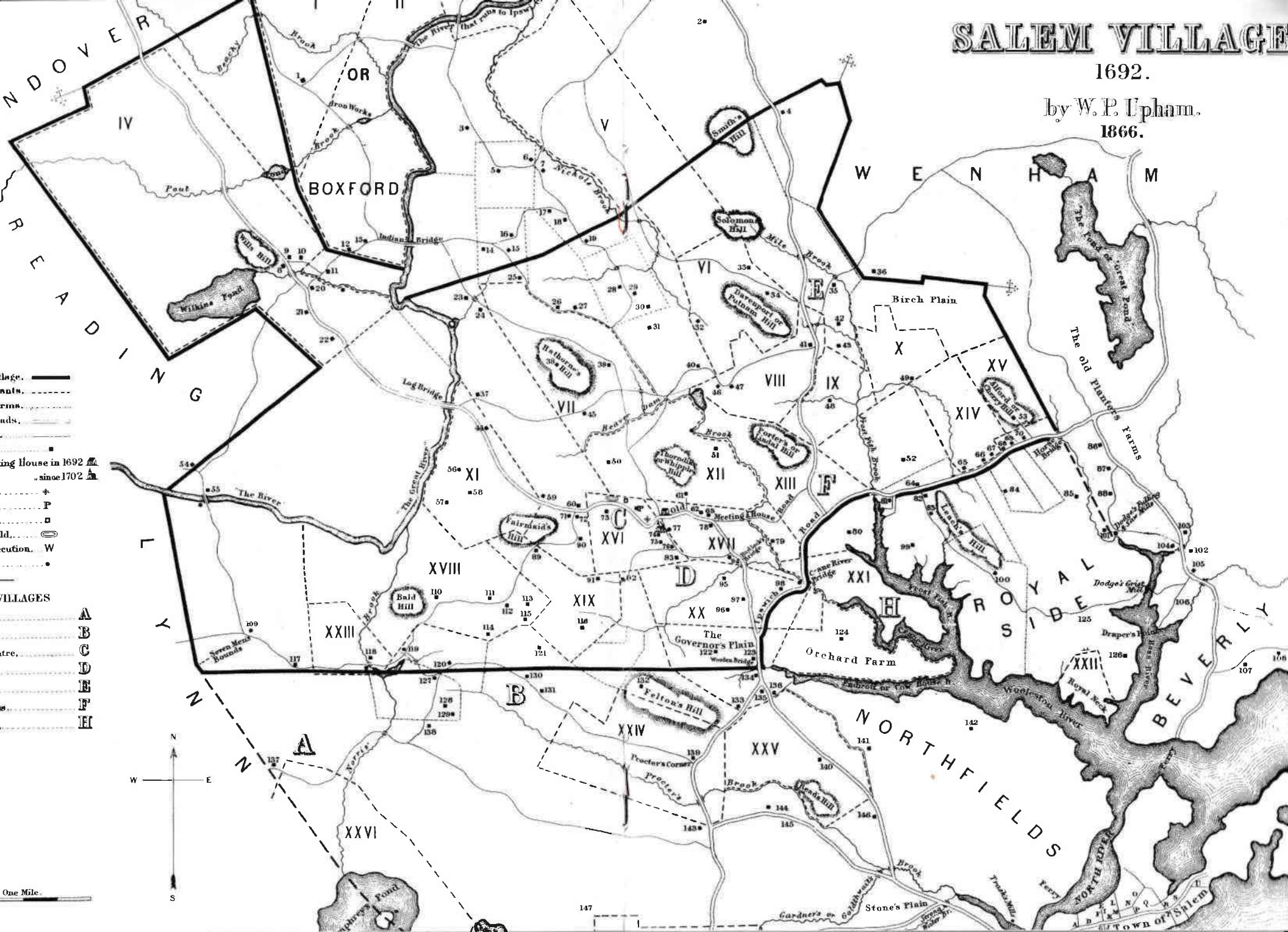
Quaker meetings were held at this home of Lawrence and Cassadra Southwick on Main Street.

1659

SALEM VILLAGE

1692.

by W. P. Upham.
1866.



Large House in 1692
since 1702
P
ld.
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VILLAGES
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B
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One Mile

Quaker persecution ended when King Charles II returned to the throne and directed the Massachusetts Governor to stop all proceedings.

In 1678, a Quaker Burial Ground was established from funds left by Edward Wharton. The site was located on the south side of Main Street opposite Howley Street. It was used until 1882 and abandoned in 1925. The bodies were removed to the Quaker burial Ground in Salem.

In 1683, Nathaniel Felton Jr. built an addition to his father's house on Hog Hill. In later years the two sections were separated to make two larger houses. These were erected close to each other and are still standing.

Jeremiah Meacham, a clothier, purchased land from his son in 1684, near Goldthwaites Brook. On this land he built his home. In 1685 he erected a fulling mill for the preparation of cloth.

*Nathaniel Felton drafted the petition
in support of his neighbor, John Proctor.*

1692

Peabody in the Salem Witchcraft Delusion

Several families from the farm section of Brooksby chose to attend the meeting house in Salem Village, foregoing their travel to the First Church in Salem. Two of these families were to become victims of the witchcraft delusion in Salem Village.

Early in 1692, several young girls from the Village began accusing other members of the church of acts of witchcraft. One of the accusers was Mary Warren, a servant in the home of John Proctor. She stated, in April, that Elizabeth Proctor, third wife of John, had afflicted her. Elizabeth was brought before the magistrates/at the meeting house in Salem, accompanied by her husband. As John spoke in behalf of his wife, he too was accused of being a wizard by the "afflicted" girls.

The Proctors were sent to prison in Boston to await trial. Nathaniel Felton and twenty of Proctor's other neighbors signed a petition testifying that the Proctors were of good Christian character. This was a courageous action, as the signers themselves risked facing charges for not believing in the accusers.



Two Families from Brooksby became the victims of the witchcraft delusion in old Salem Village.

1692

The Proctors stood trial on August 5th, and each was later found guilty. John was executed, by hanging, on August 19th. Elizabeth's sentence was stayed, as she was pregnant. She gave birth two weeks after John's execution.

By September the hysteria had passed and Elizabeth was released from prison, returning to an empty house. During the Proctors imprisonment, the sheriff went to their home and seized all their property. Some was destroyed or sold, including food and drink, leaving nothing for the support of the children.

Two more Brooksby residents became victims of the accusers. Martha Corey, a notable pious woman and a member of the Village church, expressed her disapproval of the witchcraft proceeding. As the accusers resented any opposition to their case, they accused Martha. She was arrested March 19th and at the Inquest two days later, she laughed at the accusations. The examiners found her laughter a sign of guilt and bound her over for trial. On September 9th she was tried and condemned to be hung on September 22nd. Her husband Giles did not speak in her defense.



John Proctor, found guilty of witchcraft, was executed by hanging. His memorial is located on Lowell street.

1692

On April 19th, Giles Corey was accused and examined in the meeting house at Salem Village. Giles was not a popular man, having many arguments with his neighbors. The accusers were familiar with his ways and for his inattention to the earlier case against his wife. In turn they accused him and he was sent to jail in Ipswich until his trial.

While in jail, to protect his property, he signed over the rights to his two sons-in-law who had stood by him during the examinations. His daughter Deliverance and her husband Henry Crosby were not included, as they had joined with those who had condemned him.

In September he was sentenced to death unless he entered a plea to the charges. Protective of the land he had been granted, and had fought to keep all his life, he knew that entering any plea would likely result in the Court taking his property by forfeiture.

He stood mute and was taken to Salem. Outside of the jail he was laid on the ground and covered with stones. He remained silent as they increased the stones, waiting for him to enter a plea; when he refused, saying only "more weight", the number of stones continued to be piled on until he was pressed to death. This was the most inhuman execution of any accused.



Giles Corey only replied "more weight" as he was slowly pressed to death under the weight of the stones.

1692

The First Division of the Town

As the new century arrived (1700) many changes would occur. The population was growing and concern for the education of the children became important. Since no school houses were established, in 1708 Katharin Daland began teaching small groups in the home of James Houlton on today's Prospect Street.

By this time there were almost 90 families living in the section between Salem town and Salem Village. In 1709 a petition was sent to the selectmen requesting the town establish a new precinct in order to hold religious services closer to their residences.

To be granted their request, the inhabitants had to secure land to build their meeting house. Once the court was satisfied of their intentions, the act to establish the Middle Precinct of Salem was passed on November 10, 1710.

On November 28th the people of Brooksby met and voted to build their meeting house on the lot of land granted by the town, being what is now Peabody Square. A committee was chosen to have charge of the construction.

The building was built on June 6, 1711 and in October of that year Mr. Benjamin Prescott was chosen as minister. It was not until September 23, 1713 that Mr. Prescott was ordained the first minister of the new parish. This finally ended the dispute with the First Church of Salem over the taxes and fees the inhabitants of the new precinct were to pay their former church.



Katharin Daland began teaching school on Prospect street.

1708

The next important matter to be considered in the new precinct was the education of the children. The parish men requested assistance from the town, in 1711, to establish a school. The town voted to allow them five pounds for the next three years. With this, they purchased a home and land at 60 Central Street. Education was important to the Puritans and families were urged to send their boys to the school. Schools were not free at this time and those who could not pay were given assistance by the parish. Children who did not attend school or not trained for some useful purpose, were put out to service. By 1737, four schools were established.

The Central Street area became famous for the production of pottery. Since it was close to the Danvers River it was easy to collect the sand and clay needed. In 1731, Jonathan Kettle established the first pottery on Andover Street.

Joseph Osborn established the first of the Osborn pottery shops in 1736. The kilns (or ovens) were dug in yards of their homes. Over the years there were several pottery shops, run by Osborn family members, on Central Street. The pottery manufactured by the Osborn's was later referred to as "Danvers Pottery".

More businesses were being established in the Middle Precinct. In 1735, John Southwick opened the first "general" store. Another of the Southwick family, Joseph, began the full scale manufacturing of leather, in 1739.



In 1731, Jonathan Kettle established the first pottery on Andover Street.

1731

In 1751 the residents of the Middle Precinct and Salem Village were becoming concerned about maintaining their own parishes and the fees placed on them by the town of Salem. In July of that year a petition was presented to the Town to form a separate township.

Since the colony was under British rule, a new town could not be established. In 1743, King George II had instructed the Governor to deny separation of any new towns, reasoning that it would create more members in the General Assembly and give more power to the Colony.

On January 28, 1752, a new petition calling for a district, was voted on and passed. The new District of Danvers was founded.

The Middle Precinct now became the South Parish of Danvers. The combined population of the two parishes was 1400. The church in the Middle Precinct was called "The South Congregational Church of Danvers."

Seeking to have representation, the District of Danvers, renewed its request to become a town, several times. It was not until 1757 that the General Assembly passed the bill incorporating the Town of Danvers.

The Colonists' Grievances with the Crown

In 1760, George III became King of England. As the colonies of America were growing at a rapid pace and the importing and exporting of goods increased, England became concerned that America would become too strong.

Since the colonies were under British rule, it was necessary to have a military presence and persons to oversee the interest of the motherland. The cost of maintaining this force imposed a heavy financial burden on England, especially after the French and Indian War in the 1750's.

King George III instructed Parliament to do something to relieve this burden. In 1765 the Stamp Act was put in effect and a tariff on goods imported from Great Britain was imposed on American colonies.

The people of the district, as did other towns, felt their civil rights had been threatened. As early as 1768, representatives from all communities met to deliberate these acts.

The inhabitants of the Bay Colony were always aware of the need for protection from any aggression. Each town or district had stock piles of gun powder and militia groups. A powder house was built on a hill off Tremont Street in 1765.

On November 21, 1774, Danvers voted to uphold all resolutions of the Provincial Congress in repudiating the Acts of Parliament. They also voted, in January 1775, to arm and equip each man.

There were two groups of men to serve in case of war: militia, a standing force of armed men, and minutemen, those pledged to take part at a minute's notice.

On April 19, 1775, news came of a battle with British troops at Concord and Lexington. As pre-arranged, to notify the residents, bells rang and drums beat. Within an hour, all thirty of the minutemen pledged and assigned to Capt. Gideon Foster's company, arrived at the designated spot, the corner of Washington and Main Streets.

Instructions were to wait for Col. Timothy Pickering of Salem to lead all groups. As the Salem regiment was delayed in arriving, Capt. Foster sent one of his men to Salem for permission to proceed. All was in readiness in Danvers, so Capt. Foster's company and all the others assembled left to do battle.

The minutemen marched 16 miles, in 4 hours arriving in Menotomy (Arlington) just in time to meet the retreating British troops. The Danvers group was quickly surrounded and made a valiant effort to control the British. They were totally outnumbered.

In the first skirmish, four of Capt. Foster's men were killed. As they tried to retreat, three more were killed and others grievously wounded.

Five men from the South Parish (Peabody) were killed; Samuel Cook, Benjamin Daland, Henry Jacobs, Ebenezer Goldthwait and George Southwick. The other two were from the North Parish (Danvers).



*General Gideon Foster in 1775
led the minutemen from the corner of
Washington and Main street to Arlington.*

1775

The next day the wounded and bodies of the dead were brought to Danvers. Funeral services were held at the South Church. All the South Parish men were buried at the Old South Burial Ground on Main Street, except Henry Jacobs, who was laid to rest in the family lot off Lowell Street.

During the length of the war 197 men from Danvers served, about half from the South Parish. Sixty years later, a monument was dedicated to honor those who had been killed.

After the Revolutionary War, the Town of Danvers returned to its normal affairs. The town was growing in population, the North Parish consisting mainly of farms. In the South Parish, more businesses were taking form with more leather and pottery shops. The farms in the western section continued to prosper.

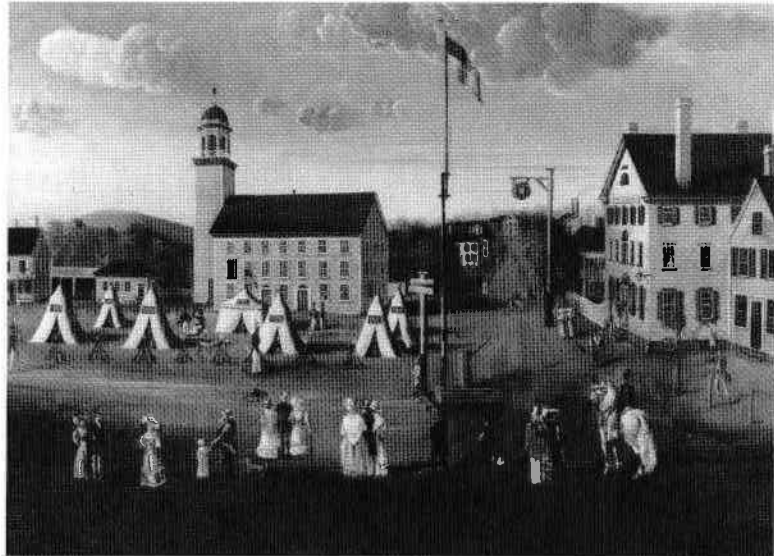
Prior to the war, the two parishes were experiencing difficulty in many of the town affairs and the South Parish wished to separate from Danvers. The final act of division would take eighty years to accomplish.

In 1855 the new Town of South Danvers was incorporated, another name in Peabody's history.

In summary, Peabody's history, the people, places and events, is that of Salem and Danvers:



- 1629 - Salem/Brooksby
- 1710 - Salem/Middle Precinct
- 1752 - District of Danvers/South Parish
- 1757 - Town of Danvers/South Parish
- 1855 - Town of South Danvers
- 1868 - Town of Peabody



Gideon Foster Jr. painted this view of Peabody Square in 1828.

1828

Credits & Acknowledgements

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History of Peabody, Theodore M. Osborne

The Peabody Story, John A. Wells

Ruth H. Hill Library, Peabody Historical Society & Museum

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Design and production by R. Fitzgibbons