

G O F F S T O W N N E W S

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In last year's fourth of July parade, there was a float called "Thomas Smith Meets the Indians in 1734". Thomas Smith was supposedly New Boston's first settler and built the first frame house in town at Harold Strong's place.

According to the Chester town history, Lt. Smith came from Ireland and was an original grantee of Chester in 1720. While he was living in Chester he was captured by Indians in 1724. The story goes like this: "One day Lt. Smith and his brother-in-law John Karr, while at work in the field, were captured by Indians. At night they were securely bound and kept separated to prevent escaping. The second night Smith, made up his mind to escape, so he took note of the direction his friend was taken. While the Indians were fast asleep he tried with all his strength to break the cords that pinned his body face down to the earth. He finally snapped them and released Karr. They travelled by night in brooks and hid in tree-tops during the day. They reached Chester three days after they escaped.

In the Chester town history, it also states Lt. Smith moved to New Boston in 1735. He was Constable in Chester in 1724 and Selectman in 1728. He died here in 1768 at the age of 80. In March 1752 Smith sold his 40-acre farm in Chester at Long Meadow to Gideon Rowel of Amesbury, Massachusetts. Some references state Smith settled in New Boston in 1733 and others say 34 or 35. However, he did settle in "The Plains" and built a log cabin, cleared some land and planted some corn. One day he noticed a footprint he thought to be Indian, so he took his gun and went

back to Chester, until he thought they had left. It was just as well Smith did leave, for a man named Worthy, who had a cabin at Parker's Station, was captured by Indians and taken to Canada.

How soon Smith returned is not told, but in volume 28 of "State Papers" dated October 26, 1749, Thomas Smith of Chester sent a petition to the Proprietors of New Boston stating he had purchased a right in New Boston of Jacob Hurd, a goldsmith of Boston. He had settled and improved land in New Boston for seven years past, making it 1742, and has a house built and was ready to move his family of four sons (Samuel,

John, James, and Reuben) which were young men fit for improving land. He therefore asked for a grant for himself and for each of his sons or five rights in New Boston.



Downtown New Boston, New Hampshire 1988

R.E. McLaughlin

There is a deed dated August 19, 1740 where where Jacob Hurd of Boston, a goldsmith, for £100 deeded to Thomas Smith of Chester lot #21, containing 50 acres, more or less, with dwelling house which was witnessed by John Indicott and William Salter.

Smith must have received the grants he asked for as there is another petition with no date which reads "4 or 5 years ago the Proprietors granted me five shares in New Boston, one for myself and each son, but Robert Boyce claimes one of these shares that I had lived for 12 years come August next. Smith had made improvements but never got a copy of his grant so he asked be granted some land in the Gore between Halestown and New Boston. This was resolved by the proprietors in the negative. Possibly the date of the petition was 1753 or 54.

Smith is said to have built the first frame house in New Boston on the site of Harold Strong's farm. In 1885 part of Smith's house was still standing and was the oldest house here, being then part of Widow Hiram Lull's place. George Strong tore this house down when he rebuilt the present house on this site.

On that first Census of 1756, Thomas Smith had a house on lot #18 and a house on #7 with 10 acres cleared on each lot. He was listed as a family of 3 men and 1 woman. As sons John and Samuel had families of their own, these two sons were probably Reuben and James. Lt. Thomas' wife was Mary. Son James froze to death on the road to Parker's Station and Reuben was in the Rev. War and later moved to Maine.



R.E. McLaughlin

Great Meadow Farm (1988)

Son Samuel lived at the Old Smith Farm, now Elliott Hersey's Great Meadow Farm and John settled Saunders farm, now Roy Follansbee's place. He was called Deacon John and died in 1800 at the age of 74. It is not certain when Lt. Thomas moved to Great Meadow or if he himself ever left "the Plains," but Hersey's farm had been in the Smith family for many years. Benjamin Smith was the last descendant of Lt. Smith to live there.

Some old deeds of Thomas Smith were recorded in the N.H. Archives in Concord and in Sept. of 1752 Smith bought lot #19 from Robert Boyce except the mill site which was reserved for the owner of the dam. Then in Oct of the same year, for £30 Boyer also sold Smith lot #20 of 50 acres. In Feb. 1753 Smith bought one share in New Boston for £26-13-4 from John Maverick a store keeper in Boston, one of the Proprietors. In Dec. 1758 Smith bought lot # 9 of 50 acres from Boyes.

In Matthew Pattern's diary entry of May 11, 1762 "I drew out Thomas Smith account and sent it to him by Thomas Kennedy and the deed he lodged with me of his place to his son for which he sent a written letter." Later in Oct. 7, 1762 Pattern wrote "I settled Thomas Smith's account with his son Reuben and he paid me the balance being £22-17-5 old tenor. It must be remembered Smith died in 1768 and was 80, so maybe he was getting so old and had Reuben do his business. The last deed in Concord of Thomas Smith is dated Sept. 1762 where he deeded for £500 to Reuben Smith land in New Boston which included #7 - #9 - #19 and #20 each of 50 acres, the lot of Jacob Hurd also 50 acres, and 40 acres of lot #30. This is very likely the account that was settled with Matthew Pattern.

And Reuben lived here in New Boston during the Rev. War and moved to Maine later, he might have lived on Strong's place until then. Reuben was Constable in New Boston in 1782 but not listed in the 1790 Census. Samuel was listed as himself, wife and two daughters. John Smith had three sons over 16, three under 16, and four daughters.

There are many descendants of Lt. Thomas Smith that lived here in New Boston for many years. There was Deacon Thomas who built the sawmill on Peacock Brook with his father John. Deacon Thomas' son John had 13 children and built the house off Weare Rd. Ivers ran the grist mill and Luke Smith had a sawmill in town 18 years.

This concludes the story of New Boston's first settler. Perhaps we will tell about eight other families who made up the first New Boston Census in 1756 in future articles.

Courtesy of New Boston Historical Society

Copy of above article made at newspaper office in New Boston, NH in July, 1988 by Ruth McLaughlin (a ggggg granddaughter of Lt. Thomas Smith through his son Samuel Smith, part of whose family emigrated to Canada shortly after 1800). Assistance of Mrs. Dee Little is gratefully recognized!

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