

History of John Stratton

John Stratton was born 24 August 1661. He lived in Watertown, where the births of his five children are recorded. He married Abigail (Prentice?) about 1688. She was 22 and he was 27 and "a weaver." Among the names of those who took full communion to church in June, 1690, is "abigail Stratton, ye wife of Young John Stratton, my neighbor." This brief entry gives us a clue that helps to confirm the residence of Abigail and John. The "neighbor" reverend was either John Bailey, who was parson of the church from 1686 to 1690 or the Reverend Gibbs who was parson from 1690 until his death in 1723. Take your pick, as each must have lived part of the year of 1690 in the parsonage on Mt. Auburn Street. A study of the early map shows that the old homesite on Mt. Auburn Street at Belmont was indeed in neighborly proximity to the church, burying ground and the parsonage. This was the church to which John and Abigail took their children to be baptized. The firstborn (1689) was called John. Ebenezer was born into a time gone temporarily berserk, for it was the summer of 1692 that the Salem witchcraft trails were going on, a vicious business that continued until 14 women and 5 men had been hanged, not to mention Giles Cory who was pressed to death for refusing to confess whether he was guilty or not guilty. Perhaps, in the sanctuary of their home, Abigail and John recalled grandfather Samuel Stratton's experience nearly 50 years before after the hanging of Margaret Jones as a witch, and felt that "freedom of speech" was no longer possible. "In 1692, if you criticized the witch court or tried to help an accused kinsman, you were in league with the Devil." By 1702 Abigail and John had

six children.

She died 25 October 1732, aged 66 years. He died, intestate, 20 February 1718, and his estate was administered the following year. Both are buried in the Old Arlington Cemetery, corner Arlington and Mt. Auburn Streets, Watertown, where stones mark their graves. In the division of the estate the five children are named. An inventory of the estate includes the manor house, barn and orchard, and 30 acres of land valued at 300 pounds and specifies 7 pd 6s 9d per annum for the maintenance of "Mr John Stratton, the honored father of the deceased."

History of John Stratton

John Stratton was fourteen years old when he arrived in Watertown, Massachusetts. Anyone who has ever moved to a new place at about the age of 14 can surely imagine what an adventure this must have been for young John. The preparations, the long sea voyage, the new and strange land. We can suppose that there was much work to be done and that John was expected to do his share. At nineteen he was admitted as a freeman, and at 25 he married 18 year old Elizabeth Traine. Elizabeth's father, John Traine, had come over in the Susan and Ellen in 1635 during the height of the great Puritan migration, and in this same ship came Margaret Dix, age 19. It is a little hard to imagine a "shipboard romance" under the then prevailing conditions of sea travel, but whenever they fell in love, John and Margaret were married after their arrival and raised a family of seven children, Elizabeth being the eldest. The early map shows John Traine as owning lots as an original grantee in the center of town, but they later lived in the western part of Watertown which was farmland.

Watertown was the first inland town in Massachusetts Bay Area as we have seen, its settlers were agriculturists but the tremendous immigration (20,000 people to Massachusetts Bay in the decade of 1633 to 1643) soon turned the faces of all the colonists westward, and Watertown was a temporary stopping place for thousands preparing to rush on. Watertown was like a busy hive in those early days sending out many swarms, among them the more adventurous among the first settlers. Dedham, Concord, Sudbury, Lancaster,

Martha's Vineyard and innumerable towns in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont had Watertown names among the first settlers.

As early as November, 1635 the inhabitants of Watertown were concerned about the 'population explosion' as evidenced by the following record:

"November 30, 1635. Agreed, by the consent of the Freemen (in consideration there be too many Inhabitants in the Town, and the town thereby in danger to be ruined) that no Foreaner coming into the Town shall have any benefit of commonage or land undivided but what they shall purchase."

Not a very enthusiastic welcome to "foreaners" John Traine and Margaret Dix, recently arrived on the Susan and Ellen. But as we have seen it did not deter them from adding to the census.

John and Elizabeth Stratton lived in the house of Mt. Auburn at Belmont. Nine children were born to them in that house. As is the custom, the firstborn son was named for his father. Since Elizabeth's father was also named John one can presume that there was no discussion about what the baby should be named.

As so often happened in those days of epidemics and little medical care, not all of the children survived. John and Elizabeth lost a child (Elizabeth) in 1659, a son in 1677 and another son in 1678. During the two decades 1640-1660 England's American colonies were left very much to themselves. Because the Massachusetts Bay charter had been brought from London to Boston at the time of original settlement, it made the colony virtually independent of England, as there was no royal governor or judge (as in Virginia,

for instance.) But the decade of the 1670's was not destined to be so carefree: New England experience in 1675-1677 the most devastating was in her entire history. King Philip's War, as it was called after the Wampanoag chief who began hostilities, was a result of pressure from both sides: from the Mohawk nation of the Iroquois confederacy, and from the English, who were now beginning to found settlements in the interior, far from tidewater. As the Indians were now skilled in the use of firearms, they were able at first to attack frontier townships at will, destroy crops, cattle and settlements and endanger the very existence of four Puritan colonies. But the Puritans had the New England Confederacy, formed in 1643, while the Indians were not united. Some four thousand Indians converted by Puritan missionaries remained loyal to England, and gradually the tough, well-disciplined New England Militia, accompanied by loyal Indian scouts and fighting chaplains, broke up Indian concentrations, destroyed their food supply and hunted down their bands one by one. The power of the natives in southern New England was broken forever, but this bloody ruthless war was won by the colonies at tremendous cost. Twenty years elapsed before all the destroyed villages were resettled.

There is a Colonial Wars marker on the grave of Elizabeth and John Stratton's son John and the record of Watertown Soldiers in the Colonial Wars reaffirms that this son fought in King Philip's War. However, using the birth dates on record, John Stratton (the son) would have been about 15 years old at the time of the war, so it is more likely that perhaps it was actually Elizabeth (Traine)

Stratton's husband John who participated in this war. At 42, it is more likely that he was one of the "tough, well-disciplined New England militia", and careful scrutiny of the birth dates of their children suggests that John may have been absent from home during the war years. Children were born in 1660, 1661, 1664, 1666, 1669, and 1672. Then a five year gap until 1677, 1678 and 1679. This break fits in with the war years of 1675-1676, but perhaps it is reading too much into the records.

In the decade of the 1680's King James II, never a friend to representative institution, "reformed" the colonial situation by revoking the Massachusetts Bay Colony charter and creating a new viceroyalty called the Dominion of New England, governed by an appointed governor and council, but with no representative council. Fortunately, James II was expelled from England in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, which put the New England colonies back where they had been before 1685.

John Stratton was a selectman of Watertown in 1682 and 1683, so certainly there must have been discussion of these events in the house on Mt. Auburn Street at Belmont.

Elizabeth Stratton died in May of 1708. We should remember her as the first of the family to be born in America, the first to whom memories of England were only secondhand, passed down from her parents and her husband.

Of her husband's date of death there are conflicting records. One source gives it as April of 1692; another as 17 March 1720.

Will of John Stratton

1708

In the name of God, Amen the fourth day of November 1708. I John Stratton of Watertown in the county of Middlesex within her Majesties Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England yeoth: being weak in body; but of Sound & Desposeing memory, thanks be given unto God therefore, calling unto mind the mortalley of my body, and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to die, Do make & ordaine this my last will and testament, that is to saie, principally & first of all I give & command my Soul into the hands of God that gave it; and for my body I comend it to the earth, to be buried in a christian-lik and-Decent manner, at the Discretion of my executors, assuredly hoping at the General Resurrection I shall receive the same againe by the mighty power of God: And as for the worldly estate it hath pleased God to bless me with in this life, I give, devise & dispose of the same in the following manner & form.

Impr: I give and bequeath to my son John Stratton & to his heires and assignes forever the mantion house barn & orchard that he now liveth in and halfe the land (that is to say) the whole of my homestall to be equally Divided between my Son Samuell Stratton & said: son John to have that and so eastward where he now dwelleth, untill the one halfe be mad up, also I give to my said Son John that lott called Clerks lott, my said Son Samuel Stratton to have free egrese & Regres-thro said lands for ever.

Item: I give and bequeath to my Son Joseph Stratton & to his heires & assignes for ever my lott of wood-land lying neer to Liue James Bruers and all my sheep, and fifteen pounds in countrey pay to be paid him by my executors within fower years after my Decease by my executors, equally out of my estate.

Item: I give and bequesth to my son Samuel Stratton and to his heires & assignes for ever the other halfe of my homestall together with my mantion house barn out houseing & orchards, and also that lot of land lying over the way against my said: house called by the name of Brights lott, also all my wareing apparrell both woollen & linen, also my best fether bed, bed sted curtaines & vallent and al the beding therto belonging, together with all say husbandrey uteneels and my oxen, and also fower chaires my great brass kittle & a tamill, one pair of andirons, spitt, fier-pan & tongs, also my will is that what provision I die seized of be returned to my said: son at my Decease, also that my said: Son Samuell & his heires & assignes to have for ever throw my son Johns land free egrese & egrese with cattles, carts and what he may have occation for. Also I give to my said: son Samuellll my Sword musquet & ammunition, livery cobard and the long table and wencecod chest.

Item: I give to my two own Daughters Elizabeth & Rebecca: my little cobart & and the great box,

Item: I give and bequeath to my Daughter Elizabeth Chenry two pounds and ten shilling in countrey pay to be paid: her by my executors equally, and also one cow, (she having already had the

greatest part of her portion out of my estate) within fower years after my Deease to be paid.

Item: I give to my Grandson John Stratton my fowlling-peie.

Item: I give to my Daughter in law my son Josephe wife one paire of sheets & one of my best putter platters.

Item: I give and bequeath to my Daughter in law, Sarah, my son Samuels wife, one pair of sheets and the next best of my puter platters.

Item: I give and bequeath to my Granddaughter Elizabeth Cherny my wives Bible.

Item: I give and bequeath to my Granddaughter Elizabeth: Seaverns my own Bible.

Item: I give and bequeath to my two Sons Samuell Stratton & John Stratton & to their heires and assignes for ever all the Rest and Residue of my out-lands wood lands, pasture land meadow land both marsh & fresh meadow together with my close of English grace, all to be equally dividd between them, also my tow comb between them.

Item: My will is that all the Rest and Residue of my moveable estate execpting two bed steds namly one trundel bed sted and the bed sted in ye Rom where the comb stands I give to my son Samuell with what I have alredy given In consideration of his care that he hath had on me, and what I hope to Receive of him towards the support of my old age, all the Rest as aforesaid to be equally Divided between my five Daughters, namly my son Johns wife, and my son Joseph wife, my son Samuels wife, my son Chenrey wife, and my

Sone Severnes wife, and I do nominat, appoint & constitute & ordaine my two sons John Stratton & Samuell Stratton my executors, to se this my last will & testament performed, and I do herby Revock may null & voide all former or other wils by me herto fore made. In witness whereof I have bereunto set my hand and seal the day and year abovesaid.

John J S (his mark) Stratton [seal]

Signed Sealed & published in the presence of

Jonas Bond

Samuell Thatcher

Manings Sawin

History of Samuel Stratton

Samuel Stratton was born in England about 1592. He settled in Watertown, Massachusetts with his wife Alice, as early, at least, as 1647. Before 1657 Alice died. The date of her death has not been learned. The last mention that has been found of her is 9 November 1649. Perhaps it will some day be ascertained why Samuel, 55 at the time, chose to leave England, and even what date and on what ship the family came. Watertown records show he was the "surveyor of town lots" in 1647. What degree of age, intelligence, experience and education this position required is only a guess. It is probably safe enough to assume that it needed reading, writing and 'rithmetic--and a pair of sturdy legs. It may be that in the course of his job as surveyor Samuel became aware of available real estate. In any case in a map of the original allotments of land in Watertown, Samuel Stratton's name is on several lots, though not as an original grantee. The inventories were made between 1638-1644 and Samuel Stratton was not a landowner in these years. This source goes on to say he was "then of Concord." Another lead to follow someday. Other records and deeds confirm that Samuel Stratton purchased 8 lots from the heirs of John Gosse (died 1643) an original grantee. This parcel is now the entrance to the famous Mt. Auburn cemetery. Again, 7 acres bought by Samuel Stratton from the grantee, J. Cloyse (moved to Falmouth). In addition, 8 acres at the corner of Belmont Street and Mt. Auburn Street, granted to Garrett Church and purchased by Samuel Stratton in 1655. This last was probably his homesite, for in several

places we find, re Samuel Stratton: "He lived on Belmont St. at Mt. Auburn St." and again, "He probably resided on the Northerly side of Mt. Auburn Street, nest westerly from Prof. J.R. Lowell's estate, which was then in Watertown but is now a part of Cambridge."

Four years after the date of Samuel and Alice's appearance on the Watertown scene the place was described as "this great town consisting of 160 families with 250 souls in church fellowship... land in tillage near 1800 acres, their herd of kine and cattle of that kind about 450, with sone store of sheep and goats." Samuel Stratton was one of those "souls in church fellowship" for on 18 May 1653 he was "admitted freeman." To be made a freeman (before 1662) a man had to be a church member, must "own ye covenant." It was necessary to be a freeman to hold land. It was not necessary, however to be either a church member or a freeman in order to hold office in the town. The only requirement for office-holding was the "oath of Fidelity." Samuel Stratton and his son John took the oath of Fidelity on 6 December 1652. John was age 19 at the time. Scarcely had Samuel and Alice gotten well settled in Watertown when a "witch" was hanged in nearby Boston. Two quotes tell the story:

Anoint Thee, Witch

"Altogether too much importance has been given to the witchcraft delusion in New England. Reading the accounts in some books of history one might be led to believe that the good people of Salem and Boston invented witches. Nothing could be further from the truth.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, all of Europe had a firm and frightening belief in the vicious power of the Devil acting through his chosen agents--witches. During those two centuries, 100,000 "witches" were put to death in Germany, 75,000 in France, 30,000 in Great Britain and a proportional number in other European countries.

In America the epidemic of superstition and panic lasted for forty years only and the total number of alleged witches put to death in the whole of New England was thirty-two, of whom only four were in Boston. In 1648 Boston hanged one witch--its first--while in England nearly 300 were executed the same year.

The Puritans believed in witches, of course. Why should they not? The Bible, their guide in all things, repeatedly warned them of the dangers of witchcraft and laid down the stern mandate. "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live." They brought with them books of English law which outlined the legal methods of discovering and punishing witches and they had studied the methods of Matthew Hopkins, the professional Witch Finder General of England. The Hopkins method of discovering a witch was by "searching" and "watching." It had the approval of the courts and the findings were accepted as evidence. It was an outrageous and indecent procedure.

The "Hopkins Method" was based on the belief that every witch had a familiar spirit, or personal imp, who was obliged to obey the commands of the sorcerer and who acted as a sort of liason officer between the witch and the Commander in Chief--the Devil. It was a

necessary function of the witch, whether male or female, to furnish nourishment for the imp from his or her own body. "Also", Hopkins claimed, "the Devil leaveth other marks upon their body, sometimes like a blue or red spot, like a flea-biting, and they be often in their secretest parts, and therefore require diligent and careful search." Examining the accused for these witch signs was the legally approved "searching."

The "watching" meant keeping the suspect under careful observation every moment for twenty-four hours. During that time the imp must visit his patron for sustenance and would be seen by the watchers. Since the imp might assume the form of a child, mouse, cat or even an insect, a visitation was fairly probable.

Margaret Jones was a neighborly soul and something of an amateur physician. She explored the woods and fields for medicinal herbs and roots with which she treated ailing friends. Unfortunately, her ministrations were remarkably successful and Margaret acquired a considerable reputation, not as a doctor, but as a witch. When a neighbor's cow died, Margaret was accused of putting a spell on the unfortunate animal. "Searched", "watched," sentenced and hanged, she became Boston's first victim. This was in 1648."

Now it seems that Samuel and Alice Stratton were not of the strictest Puritanic stripe but were generous and liberal in their thinking and their treatment of those who differed from them. They were among the few who cherished a leniency toward the so-called "witches."

From the old, half-effaced court papers of the period one learns that "Samuel Stratton said that Jones' wife died wrongfully and was no witch and that the magistrates would do anything for bribes, and the members also. Ales (Alice) Stratton said that Goodwife Jones dyed wrongfully and was no more a witch than she was."

County Court, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 30 October, 1649

"Samuel Stratton, Sr. and his wife should appear before the publique assembly at Watertown the next Lecture Day to pay a fine of 5 pounds and acknowledge their offense committed against ye commonwealth and court and acknowledge ye justice and leniency of the court in dealing so mercifully with them."

The record shows that they paid the fine. "but of the charges laid upon them they are of the same mind."

Alice died within ten years after their arrival.

June 27, 1657, Samuel married Margaret, daughter of Thomas Bowlins, and widow of William Paker of Scituate and Boston. They were married in Boston by Governor John Endicott. Margeret died, a widow, in Watertown, 7 December 1676, aged 81 years. Samuel Stratton owned real estate in Watertown and Concord, --several lots, with mansion, barn, orchard, etc. His descendants are found today in almost every State in the Union. More than two thousand of them have been traced. In almost every case they are among the substantial citizens of the towns in which they dwell, many occupy positions of trust and honor.

Will of Samuel Stratton

1672

In the name and by the help of ye Lord Jesus Christ I Samuel Stratton Senior, being in Sound memory and understanding, But near my Death I make my last will and testament. I give my Body to ye Earth from whence I had it to be decently buried, and my soule I give to God yet gave it me in shure and certaine hope of ressurection to life through ye merritts of Christ Jesus, and concerning my good yet God hath left me to wit-my house and land at home and abroad my cattell chattlles what ever belongs to me in New England I will it after my deacease they be apprised, and my Debts being paid I will it be delivered into the hand of my sonn John after my Decease to be disposed of as followeth. I Will it my loving wife have out of my state a comfortable maintenance, and after her death I will it all ye movables in my house or more remote I will it sonn John shall fully and peacably injoy without any molestation or disturbance, onely I will it my grandson Samuel ye sonn of my deceased son Richard which he is of age shall have ye house and land adjoining to it my sonn John dwelt in to ye time it he entered into ye farme he now is in being formerly ye land of old Felch, Mis Allen and old Folger, willing it ye land On Concord formerly being mine but now in my sonn Samuells hand it be his forever as his full due and portion.

And I appoint my sonn John my sole executour of this my last will & testament revoking all other wills heretofore made, wittness my hand this p'sent 19 December 1672.

My will is it servent Thomas Cooper have a cow after my
decease

Samuel X (his mark) Stratton, [seal]

Sealed & delivered in prence of
Richard Norcross.

Cambridge 31 January 1673

Mr Richard Norcross being sworne do say that he was present
when Samuel Stratton above named deceased, Signed, Sealed &
Published this instrument as his last will & testament, and that
according to his best understanding he was of sound judgement &
memory when he so did.

Justinian Holden aged about 60 years being sworne do say that
he was present with the above named Samuel Stratton deceased about
ye time he made this his last will as he apprehends it was ye same
day and he ye said Samuel declared to him that he had an intent to
alter one he had formerly made and that he would make his last will
to be accord to the contents of this above written instrument, for
the substance thereof, and according to his best understanding he
did judge him at ye time to be of sound Judgement & memory.

Before Capt Daniel Gookin

& Thomas Danforth, Recorder

This will was made when he was "near his death" - which
probably accounts for its not bearing his autograph. He died 25
December 1672, aged 80 years.

Inventory of Estate of Samuel Stratton

1672

This is an Inventory of the houses and Lands and moveables of Samuel Stratton senior deceaset apprised by us who have subscribed this 3rd of January 1672

	pd	s	d
Impr Wearing Cloaths both Linnen and woollen	001	15	00
In ye Roome called parler	008	00	00
A cubbard and cubbard and a deske	001	00	00
A table 2 forms six qushons 3 chairs on stoole	001	10	00
A warming pan: a paire of tongs and a pair of small cobirons	001	10	00
In ye roome called ye kitchen: 3 kitlets 2 skillets	001	10	00
Seven pewter platters 2 little plates of pewter 2 pewter cups a pint bottle one salt one pewter pott and a dram cup six spoones	001	04	00
One iron mortar one friing pan a pair of tongs a tranell a peelee one iron candle stick: an old gridiron an iron pot	001	00	00
A kneeding trough 3 pailles a tray 4 wooden dishes 2 earthen pans one earthen pott	001	00	00
Ammunition; 2 muskits a fowling peece a rest a cutlass a paire of bandeleeves	001	10	00
In ye roome called ye butry a table a box a keeler a linnen wheele 2 woollen wheels	001	00	00
In ye Chamber over ye parler: A small flock bed			

one fether pillow a small boltster 2 sheets	001 00 00
and some old lumber in the same chamber	000 10 00
In ye Chamber over ye Kitchen 4 hoops and 4 boxes	001 10 00
a cross cut saw, a handsaw a hamer 3 axes	000 16 00
In ye room called ye Ciller 6 barrells 3 old keelers	001 00 00
A parcell of small cheeses	000 16 00
A grindstoe and iron wrench	000 06 00
Utensils for husbandrie one old card and wheeles	
and iron belonging to them one plow 2 chains	005 10 00
About 4 bushels of Indian Corn in the ears	000 10 00
Pease and wheare in ye barne and hay	002 00 00
seaven hors kind young and old	015 00 00
eleven neat cattle young and old	022 00 00
2 sheepe and two swine	001 10 00
A dwelling house and out house with ye land about	
ye od houses ye land containing about 65 acres	
with one acre of marsh	100 00 00
10 acres of meadow in Cambridge	020 00 00
A lott called dividant land of 35 acres	009 00 00
A parcell of land called township land 10 acres	007 00 00
A parcell of land called a farme	008 00 00
A panall	000 04 00
A fowleing peece a case of pistolles and holsters	
and a hemp comb and Iron crow and a spade	001 13 00
An other dwelling house and barne with 19 acres	030 00 00

A frow and a paire of hooks for a yoake 3 rods of

upland

001 10 00

The estate of Samuel Stratton aforsaid was apprised ye day and
yeare afforsaid by us.

Richard Beeres

Henrie Bright

William Bond