

History of Lawrence Leach

Lawrence was born in the parish of Martock Ash, Somersetshire, England in 1579 or 1580. He married Elizabeth about 1604, in England. She was born about 1585, in England.

Lawrence and Elizabeth had ten children, most of them were born in England and some were born in Massachusetts.

Lawrence Leach and his family were Puritans.

A company in England led by Rev. John White, a conforming Puritan and a group in Salem Massachusetts wanted to help the Puritans obtain a way to America where they could worship God as they thought best.

John Woodbury came to England from Salem the latter part of 1627 to see what could best be done for the Colony. While there he helped make up a charter for a grant of land for the settlement. After this was approved March 1628, John returned to America. This charter was also signed by Charles I on 4 May 1629.

In the charter there were no words which necessitated the residence of the corporation officers be in England as in previously chartered companies.

Knowing this, they began encouraging Puritans to set sail for New England. In Chronicles of Massachusetts Page 16, we find:

"At a meeting in London of the Massachusetts Bay Colony Company, or General Court (July 28th) Governor Matthew Cradock advises of the proposal made for the encouragement of persons of wealth and quality to remove themselves and families thither that the government of the plantation should be transferred to

those that shall inhabit there."

Governor Matthew Craddock no doubt knew Lawrence Leach and his family, as it says in the book "Lawrence Leach of Salem," by Phelps:

"When Lawrence Leach was about leaving Old England for New England, Gov. Craddock wrote from Gravesend, England under date of 17 April 1629, a long letter concerning the affairs of the new colony, to Gov. John Endicott of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in which letter the following paragraph is found:

"We desire you to take notice of one Lawrence Leach, whom we have found a careful and painful man, and we doubt not, he will continue his diligence. Let him have deserving respect."

His life in America would seem to have fully justified the confidence reposed in him by Gov. Craddock, as he was chosen 31 December 1638, one of the seven men to manage the public affairs of Salem; an office which he held for years, and had among his colleagues Gov. John Endicott, William Hawthorne, Roger Conant, John Woodbury and John Balch.

He was proposed for a freeman at Salem, in 1630, and was sworn 18 May 1630; was one of the twelve jurymen which in Boston, in 1630, served on the trial of the first capital case that was heard in Massachusetts.

Lawrence Leach was one of the founders of the church at Salem, of which he was a prominent member. He engaged in farming and milling, at Rial-side. His mills were so important that a way was laid out to them, in 1657, from the meeting house to Cape Ann side

and other adjacent towns caused roads to be open to them. He also had an iron foundry, which was the first in the colonies. Pope's "Pioneers of Massachusetts" says: "Mr. John Leach, brother of Lawrence, was occupied at the iron works."

We also find in Pioneers of Massachusetts, by Pope, page 280-1, "Lawrence Leach, sent over to Salem by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629, proprietor; town officer repeatedly. Lands grant to sons Robert and John 1636-7. Wife Elizabeth member of the church in the earliest list.

His will was probated 25 April 1662, when he was 85 years old. He bequeathed all to his wife, owned 30 pounds for the mill. Administration grant to widow Elizabeth."

Ref: Some of the above was taken from "Lawrence Leach of Salem, Massachusetts, and Some of His Descendants," by Fayette Phelps Leach, Vol 1.

The following is taken from Ryal Side and From "Early Days of Salem Colony" - by Calvin Pierce.

"Several assignments of land at Ryal Side were made to Mr. Lawrence Leach from time to time, some of which are among the earliest recorded. He established his home near the "greate hill" (Folly Hill) at what is now known as the Putnam farm on Elliott Street.

Mr. Leach lived on his farm until he sold his homestead to his son, Richard, prior to 1650, for about that time he acquired the cornmill of John Friend for forty pounds, paid ten pounds on account, and operated the mill until he died in 1662, intestate.

When Mr. Leach bought the cornmill of John Friend, it appears that upon a two-acre lot adjacent to the mill, at what is now the junction of McKay and Elliott Streets, John Friend some time built one dwelling house within the confines of the William King lands. Mr. Leach appears to have occupied this house, and while it is mentioned in the inventory of his estate he never possessed the title, as it was later purchased by his son, John Leach, William King, on 8 November 1662.

Although the cornmill is also included in the inventory of the estate of Lawrence Leach, he never possessed the title, for the property was conveyed by Samuel Friend, administrator of his father's estate, by bill of Sale to John Leach, 7 September 1665.

This bill witnesseth that I Samuel Friend of Manchester have bargained and sold to Lawrence Leach of Salem, now deceased, the mill & mill house standing in Basse River with all the appurtenances thereof together with two acres of land adjoining thereto and 20 acres a little distance of all of Ryall neck side & there being no bill of sale made til now do hereby grant & confirm this sale aforesaid unto John Leach same unto Lawrence Leach aforsd & to his heirs & executors forever.

Samuel Friend.

Witness, Roger Conant.

On account of the natural attractiveness of this locality, artists found considerable interest and enjoyment in sketching the landscape; it was a favorite haunt of the boys of the town for swimming, fishing, and other features of recreation, and the people

would picnic in the clean and shady grove on the little hill near Mr. Leach's mill."

This mill was in operation until 4 June 1889, when it was burned down.