

JOHN PORTER (1590-1648) ae. 58

ANNA WHITE (1600-1647) ae. 47

In the book "John Porter and his Descendants" is found two reviews of the lives of John Porter, the immigrant, son of John and Sibil (Vasey) Porter, and his wife, Anna (White) Porter. The second account is a reproduction from Stiles "History of Ancient Windsor", Volume 2.

The first review gives the following account:

"Among the early settlers of New England, in the great tide of emigration from England, subsequent to the granting of the charter for the colony of Massachusetts Bay, in 1628, came John Porter.

"The records in England give his descent, in the sixteenth generation from William de la Grande, a Norman Knight who came in the army of the Norman Duke, at the conquest A.D. 1066, and that he acquired lands at or near Kenilworth in Warwickshire.

"His son, Ralph (or Roger) became "Grand Porteur" to Henry First A.D. 1120 to 1140, from which he derived the name 'Porter'.

"The Windsor Church was formed in Plymouth, England, in March of 1630, by people from Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Warwickshires. The Reverends John Maverick and John Warham being ordained respectively as paster and teacher." ¹

Whatever relationship was had between the newly organized Separatist group and the Porter and White families, we are left to wonder, but we do know that they were followers of these two Reverends from England to Dorchester, now (Milton) Mass., and again were with the same group who migrated from Dorchester to Windsor, Conn. (Maps #2, 6 and 23)

"They left England at a time when thick clouds of civil and religious persecution overcast their homeland. Church and State were becoming more and more exacting in their demands; all rights of conscience and faith were denied and every heart was filled with forebodings of the future. Every assembly was subjected to a constant and minute inspection. Every little congregation of Separatists was tracked out and broken up. Even the devotions of private families could not escape the vigilance of spies. And the tribunals afforded no protection to the subject against the civil and ecclesiastical tyranny of that period. It was then that America, long known to the English people for its valuable fur trade and fisheries, began to be regarded as an asylum by those whose principles and persecutions had left them no alternative but exile. Hope whispered to their saddened hearts that, perhaps, in these savage western wilds, they might be permitted to enjoy those privileges which were denied them at home." ²

Foremost among the groups who settled in the Boston Bay area was the Dorchester group which afterwards removed to Windsor, Conn. The emigration was accomplished through the exertions of the Rev. John White, "whose zeal and labors fairly entitle him to the appellation of the 'great patron of New England emigration'. Great pains were taken to construct the venture of such materials as should compose a well ordered colony, containing all the elements of an independant community." ³

Brainerd T. Peck, a Connecticut genealogist of dependable reputation,

submitted a pedigree sheet that gave information from vital records which verified what had been written by other authors.

John Porter was born in 1590, and was baptized June 21, 1594, at Holy Cross Church of Felsted, Essex, Eng. He married Anna White at All Saints Church of Messing, Essex, Eng., on October 18, 1620. Anna was baptized July 13, 1600, at Shalford, Essex, Eng., the daughter of Robert and Bridget (Allgar) White (3-5) of Messing and Shalford, Essex, Eng. John's parents were John and Sibil (Vessey) Porter (3-1) of Little Baddow, Essex. John and Anna left England with their family of several children in 1634 in the ship "Bevis" for New England. Anna was a sister of Mary White, who married Joseph Loomis and Elizabeth White, who married William Goodwin. These three sisters, with their husbands and children, came to America, probably at the same time, settling in Windsor, Connecticut, after a short stay in the town of Dorchester within the Boston Bay area. ⁴

Continuing with the earlier account in the book, "John Porter and his Descendants", we read:

"In 1630, or thereabouts, they came to New England, settling at Dorchester, Mass., on the first settlement of that town. In the summer of 1635, the arrivals having become numerous and the settlement 'somewhat crowded and hearing ye fame of ye Quinnitukut River' a company was formed to make a settlement there, and on the fifteenth day of October they took their departure, carrying with them their church organization under the Rev. John Warham, the Rev. Mr. Maverick remaining at Dorchester.

"The journey from the Massachusetts coast was made in about fourteen days time, the distance being more than one hundred miles and through a trackless wilderness. They had no guide but their compass and made their way over mountains, through swamps, thickets and rivers, which were not passable but with great difficulty. They had no cover but the heavens nor any lodging but those which simple nature afforded them. They drove with them an excess of one hundred and fifty head of cattle and subsisted on the way, in a great measure, on the milk of their kine.

"This adventure was the more remarkable as many of the company were persons of figure, who had lived in England in honor, affluence, and delicacy, and were entire strangers to fatigue and danger.

"This company reached the Connecticut River at a place called by the natives 'Matteneaug', but to which the settlers gave the name of Windsor, many of their numbers being from the place of that name in England.

"In 1639, the Rev. Hewett from Kenilworth, Eng., was called to assist Mr. Warham and it is most probable that John Porter accompanied him, as at about that date his name first appears upon the public records..." ⁵

Rev. Hewett and his company traveled the same route across the wilderness of Massachusetts to Windsor and under similar circumstances as the Rev. Warham's company, and Rev. Hooker's company who settled in the neighboring town of Wethersfield. (See 2-3) Oxen pulled wooden wheeled carts with possessions and provisions; pack horses were laden heavily with their load and an occasional rider, while most of the people walked much of the way, herding their livestock as they went. By the time this group arrived at Windsor, the town plots needed only to be extended to allow space for raising a log house for each new-

coming family. Neighbors pitched in to help hurry the work of a shelter before the bitter cold of a New England winter set in. For those English people who had never experienced a snow storm in their homeland, the extreme climate of their new surroundings must have seemed a most challenging and baffling change.

"John Porter's residence in Windsor appears to have been located near the 'Little River' at its junction with the Connecticut River and between the residences of George Phelps and Joseph Loomis, and nearly opposite those of Henry Wolcutt and Matthew Allyn.

"He was, for that period, a man of considerable substance as appears by his Will printed in the public records of Connecticut.

"He died in Windsor April 22, 1648, his wife Rose having died in July, 1647." ⁶ (Some sources gave Rosanna as her name, which, if correct, would account for the name of Rose, as well as for the name Anna in its printed usages.)

The second review of John Porter and his family, as given by Joseph W. Porter in the foregoing source, was an account of statements furnished by Henry D. White of New Haven, Conn.:

"John Porter came from England with his wife and nine children from Felsted, County Essex, England, probably in the ship 'Susan and Ellen', 17 July, 1638, and in company with his brother-in-law, Joseph Loomis. In the Parish Register of Messing, County Essex, England, is the following record of their marriage:

"1620, October 18, John Porter of Felsted and Anna White of Messing Parish Register, was baptized 13 July, 1600, and was the daughter of Robert White of Messing, by his wife Bridget daughter of William Allgar of Shalford, County Essex. (Map 1 #28)

"Anna White was probably the sister of Mary White of Messing who married Joseph Loomis, the emigrant ancestor of the Windsor family of that name. Another sister, Elizabeth White, married 7 November, 1616, William Goodwin of Hartford, Conn., and the three families of Porter, Loomis and Goodwin are thought to have migrated from the Bay area to settle in Connecticut at about the same time. Elder John White, who left England in 1632 and who came to Windsor, is also thought to be a brother of John Porter's wife, Anna White." ⁷

If this information is true, it becomes evident that John and Anna Porter were not alone without relatives and friends in such a decision to make Windsor their home. (Map #23)

"John Porter had land grants in Windsor; was appointed Constable, 1639-40; grand-juror, 1643; juror, 1640; deputy to the General Court 1646 and 1647 and a prominent man in church and community affairs. He died 21st and buried 22nd April, 1648, in Windsor Congregational Church yard; left a large estate. His wife died less than a year earlier, July, 1647.

Children:

1. John Porter, md. Mary Stanley
2. James Porter, a merchant and colonial agent for Connecticut in London, married Sarah Tudor of Windsor.
3. Sarah Porter, born 1626, married 24 October, 1644, Joseph Judson of Milford, Connecticut and died 16 March, 1696, age 70.
4. Samuel Porter, md. about 1659, Hannah, dau. of Thomas Stanley, died 6 September, 1689. Hannah died 18 December, 1708.

5. Mary Porter, md. 27 May, 1658, Samuel Grant of Windsor, Conn.
6. Anne Porter, md. 24 Feb., 1644, William Gaylord of Windsor.
7. Joseph Porter
8. Rebecca Porter
9. Rose Porter, probably the Rose who was buried 12 May, 1648, born in Windsor, Conn.
10. Nathaniel Porter, born 19 July, 1640; baptized same year, married (1) Anna (or Hannah) Groves of Stratford, Conn., (2) Elizabeth Groves, sister of Anna, the first wife. He died 1680.
11. Hannah Porter, born 4 September, 1642; baptized same year; married John Coleman of Deerfield, Mass." 8

The town records of Windsor were not kept prior to 1650, so we have undoubtedly lost much which would have been expedient to know. Yet from the Colonial Documents we are able to trace some fragments of information on the development of the infant town during the first few years of its existence. Of major importance to the settlers was the maintenance of sufficient guard against Indian attacks. Any neglect of duty in this regard was sorely punishable by fines. In these and other regulations, we find evidence of the constant watchfulness necessarily imposed upon settlers during colonial times.

"...In no part of New England were the Indians so numerous, in proportion to the territory, as in this valley, and traditions of the horrors of the Indian wars are linked with almost every village throughout the whole extent of the valleys of the Connecticut River. For years after the first settlement, there was scarcely an hour in which the inhabitants, especially of the frontier towns, could travel in the forests, work in the fields, worship God in their churches, or lie down in their beds at night, without apprehension of attack from their stealthy and remorseless foe. The fact that the attacks of the Indians were preceded by no note of preparation gave a sense of insecurity to the members of the family at home, or the heads of the family abroad, which made the real danger, great as it was, seem more formidable. The blow fell where and when it was least expected. When the Indian seemed most intent on his avocation of hunting and fishing, or in planning some distant expedition—then the farmer in the field would be surprised by an ambuscade, or on his return home find his house in ashes, his wife and children butchered or hurried away into captivity; or the quiet of his slumbers would be broken by the war-whoop, and the darkness of midnight illumined by the glare of the village on fire. Those were trials of which the present generation can know nothing.

"They were trials, however, to which the settlers of Windsor were fully exposed, and from which a merciful Providence, in a remarkable degree, preserved them. The Indians who resided in their neighborhood always exhibited a friendly feeling, and seemed to regard the presence of the whites as a protection against the attacks of other Indian tribes. Yet the character of the Indian was always uncertain and experience dictated the necessity of constant care and jealous watchfulness in all their dealings with them. Added to the constant dread of Indian treachery, was no small amount of loss and trouble among their cattle, who had suffered so much from exposure during those early winters.

"...Indian problems seemed to be the weightiest of matters which occupied the attention of the Windsor people. They, together with their neighbors of Hartford and Wethersfield, became involved in a contest, upon the event of which their lives and welfare and all that is most dear to the human heart were staked. We refer to the breaking out of the Pequot War. Since the first approach of the white man to the valley of the Connecticut, that tribe seemed to have imbibed a bitter hostility toward the English. As early as 1634, they began the work of murder and pillage, and in 1636, they conceived a design of extirpating and driving the whites from New England...

"The murderous attack on Wethersfield, on the 23rd of April, 1637, finally aroused the English to strike a blow, as sudden as it was successful and decisive. At the court, convened on the first of May following, the deliberations were doubtless weighty and important. The first line of the record of this court is sententious but energetic: 'It is ordered that there shall be an offensive war against the Pequots.' Mark well the words, 'an offensive war'. No longer would they stand on the defensive, they had now drawn the sword, and that sword could only 'be sheathed in victory or death'. And then follows in the same terse and energetic language, 'There shall be 90 men levied out each of the three plantations, Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor...' " 9

The mandate included instructions which levied war time supplies upon each settlement and officers were delegated and entrusted with powers to command.

"...Thus equipped, the troops of the several towns left Hartford May the 10th after spending an evening in earnest prayer; many relatives and friends watching them row away on the river to meet their foe. Never before nor since did the placid bosom of the Connecticut bear a more precious freight.

"It is not our purpose to accompany them during this short but decisive campaign, the details of which are to be found in every history of New England.

"Let us, however, return to those who were left at home without sufficient guard within the Palizado of Windsor. What their feelings and forebodings were in the absence of their armed members we can only conjure. The decisive battle of May 26th was fought and the Pequod power was broken; the victorious little army was on its homeward march, full of joy and gratitude for success such as they had hardly dared to hope...A day of special thanksgiving was proclaimed throughout the colonies, and everywhere the song of exultant victory was blended with prayer and praise to Him who ruleth on high. In all these rejoicings, we may well believe that the good people of Windsor had their full share..." 10

The Porters arrived in Windsor when this cloud of war had passed, still a new danger threatened. The necessary expenses and supplies required for the expedition, although promptly and cheerfully met, had left the country impoverished and burdened with debt. Every article of clothing and food required had drained the farms of produce and the lack of laborers at tilling time had effected a great scarcity...The winter was very severe. Snow was at times four and five feet deep and lay on the ground from the 4th of November to the 23rd of March. Such were conditions when John and Anna Porter arrived with their seven or eight children. Nathaniel Porter (3-3), our ancestor, was, as shown in the family listing, the tenth child of John and Anna, born in Windsor, Conn., in 1640.

The parents lived to see the new settlement of Windsor barely started. Anna died after only eight years in Windsor and John died a year later, when the youngest child was five or six years of age and Nathaniel was a child of about 8 years.

Indian troubles did not entirely cease after the Pequod War, for in the lifetime of Robert and Anna's children, came another war of extermination--the King Philip's War of 1676. The dread of this war was felt in every colony of New England. Indians had been mobilized and aroused throughout the land. The French in Canada had done their share to turn the Indian against the English and what had been fears and suspicions, turned into an all-out struggle

of survival for the colonies.

Verna B. Judd of Mesa, Arizona, made a more complete listing of the children of John and Anna Porter. Her references show that this couple brought six children with them from Felstead, Essex, England; Anna 13, John 11, Sarah 9, James 7, Rebecca 4 and Rose only 1 year of age. One child, Samuel, #6, had died in England at the age of six weeks. The other six children were born in America, understandably at Windsor, Connecticut. #8 child may have been born in the Bay area, 1635, or while the family was in route from Dorchester, Mass., to Windsor, Conn. The listing of the thirteen children is given in the following order:

1. Anna Porter, chr. Sep. 22, 1621; md., Feb. 24, 1641-2, William Gaylor; died, 1654.
2. John Porter, chr. Feb. 9, 1623; md. 1650, Mary Stanley; died, Aug. 2, 1688.
3. Sarah Porter, chr. Mar. 15, 1624-5; md. Oct. 24, 1644, Joseph Judson; died, Mar. 16, 1696.
4. James Porter, chr. Feb. 20, 1627-8; died, Sep. 27, 1727.
5. Rebecca Porter, chr. Sep. 16, 1630; md. Oct. 16, 1650, (1) John Clark; died, Jan. 9, 1682-3.
6. Samuel Porter, chr. May 26, 1632; died, Jul. 16, 1632.
7. Rose Porter, chr. June 24, 1633; died, May 12, 1648.
8. Samuel Porter, chr. June 2, 1635; md. 1659, Hannah Stanley.
9. Mary Porter, chr. Oct. 1, 1637; md. May 26, 1658, Samuel Grant.
10. James Porter, b. abt. 1638; md. Sarah Tudor.
11. Nathaniel Porter, b. July 19, 1640; md. 1664, (1) Hannah Groves; md. 1673 (2) Elizabeth Groves (sister of Hannah); died Jan. 1680.
12. Hannah Porter, b. Sep. 4, 1642; md. May 29, 1663, John Coleman; died Sep. 19, 1677.
13. Joseph Porter, b. 1644.

Anna died at the age of 47, when her three oldest children were married and her other children ranged in ages from 20 to 3 years. The following year John, the father, died at the age of 58, leaving nine in the home without parents. Rose, age 15, died two weeks following the passing of her father. It seems that records do not reveal information about Joseph, the youngest child, except that he was born in 1644.

Though John and Anna's pioneer efforts were of short duration, their colonizing impress was of great magnitude. They helped to found a new colony when the striving was harsh and difficult, and they planted a great posterity in a new land; a posterity that was to help fashion a nation on the principles of freedom and individual initiative.

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| 1. #27(b), p.3 | 6. ibid, p.4 |
| 2. #117, pp.18, 19 | 7. ibid, p.5 |
| 3. ibid, pp.20, 21 | 8. ibid |
| 4. #2, Vol. 2 chart (17-432) | 9. #117, pp. 65-67 |
| 5. #27(b), p.3, 4 | 10. ibid, pp. 68, 69 |
| | 11. #170 p. (3-2) |