JARVIS MUDGE (abt. 1615-1652or3)
REBECCA _____ (abt. 1625-1662)

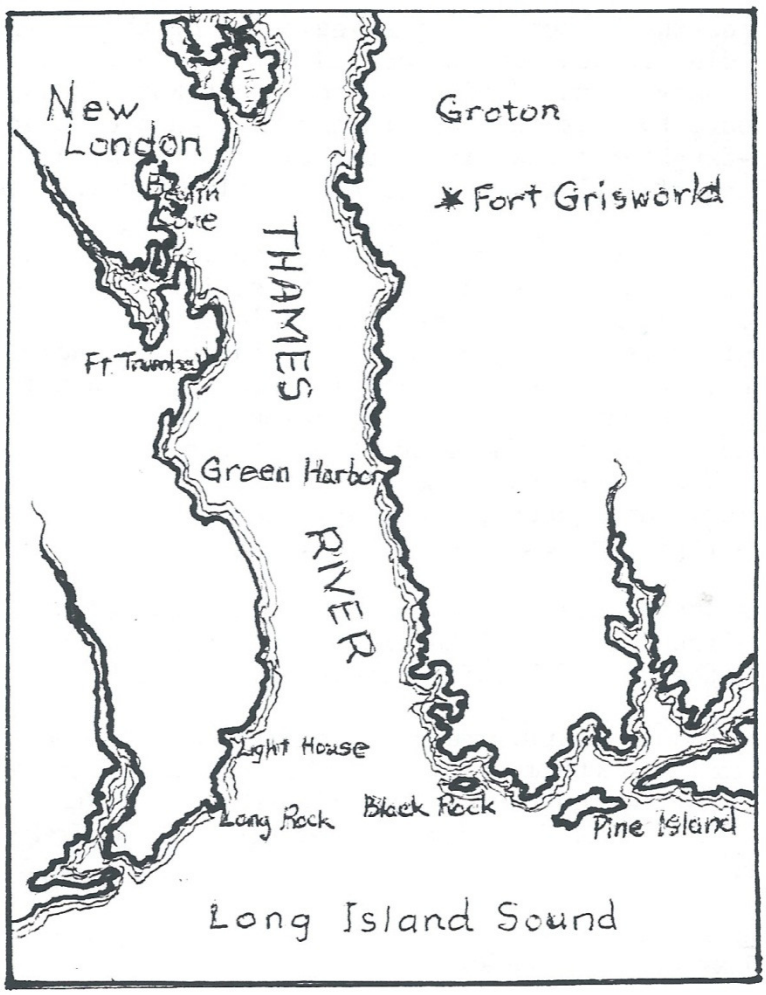
It is interesting to note, at the beginning of this sketch, that Jarvis Mudge lived and died in New london, as did our paternal ancestor Robert Royce (1-1). However, Jarvis, had died prior to Robert Royce's appearance in that town. Of interest, too, is the fact that more than two hundred years later the 5th great grand-daughter of Jarvis Mudge, Elizabeth Elmira Babbitt, married the 4th great grandson of Robert Royce, Leonard Gurley Rice (1-7).

From the Introductory pages of 'Mudge Memorials' some extracted material from an earlier publication speaks of the possibility that the name Mudge is Anglo Saxon in origin, having the meaning of 'courageous'. In the same coverage it is further stated that the early spelling of the name "Mugge" coupled with the fact that it is often met with in Germany, points more certainly to a Teutonic origin. The name, it was said, was unquestionably 'Mugge' with the letter 'g' pronounced soft. The transition of the spelling to 'Mudge' was made by the English. The above source material tells us that the family of Mudge "boasts considerable antiquity in English history," and as related by the author, Alfred Mudge, is found on record as early as the close of the 14th century. [1]

The earliest reference to our Jarvis Mudge was made by the above author in his writings published in 1868. He examined Massachusetts and Connecticut records and put together the following concise statement:

> "Jarvis Mudge, born in England, came to this country about the year 1638; was in Boston that year; in Hartford, Connecticut in 1640, in Wethersfield in 1642 and removed to Qequot, now New London, in 1649, where he died in the early part of 1653. (One author gives his death date June 2, 1653.) He married the widow Rebecca Elsen, of Wethersfield in 1649. Their children were:
>
> 1. Micah Mudge, b. in New London in 1650; md. Mary Alexander, dau. of George and Susannah (Sage) Alexander (7-46)
> 2. Moses Mudge, b. in New London in 1652; md. Mary _____" [2]
>
> "Rebecca Elsen had two young daughters by her former marriage to Abraham Elsen and following the Elsen estate settlement and Rebecca's marriage to Jarvis Mudge, this new couple moved from Wethersfield to the Pequot settlement that later was named New London, Connecticut.
>
> "Rebecca was living in Wethersfield when her husband, Abraham Elsen (or Elsing) passed away early in the year 1648. His Will provided that his estate care for his daughters. Rebecca and Abraham had three daughters:
>
> 1. Sarah Elsen, b. March 17, 1644
> 2. Hannah Elsen, b. Aug. 15, 1645
> 3. Mariah Elsen, b. Aug. 14, 1646
>
> "One had probably died before the marriage of Rebecca to Jarvis Mudge. The inventory of the goods and lands of Mr. Elsen mentions 'She (Rebecca) hath two daughters, one three year old, the other a year and half.'" [3]

The above author asserted that "There is nothing to show that he (Jarvis) had been married before 1649. His son Micah died in 1724, aged seventy-four years, which is further proof of his birth in 1650. Moses died about the year 1729, age 77 years." [4]



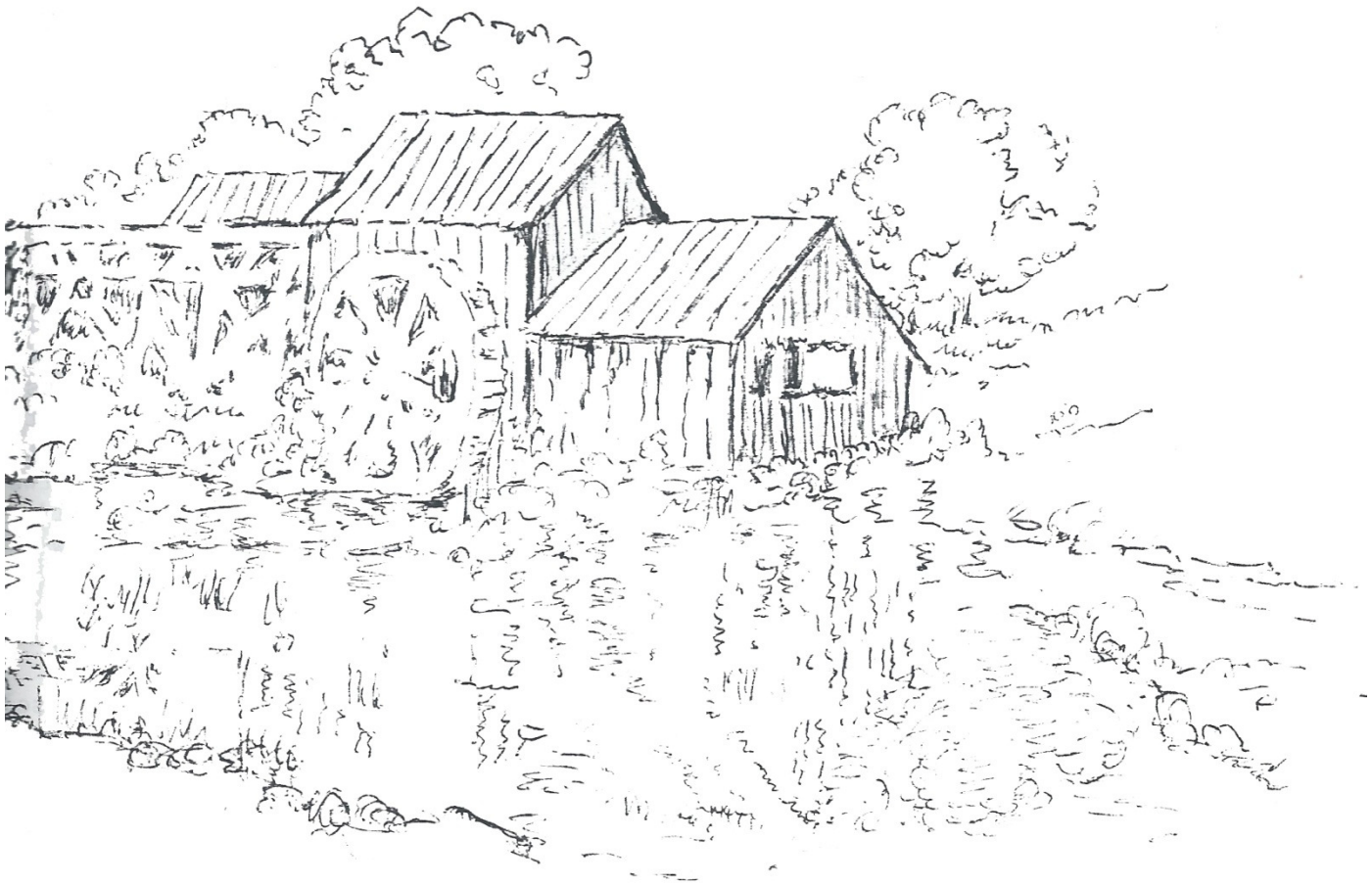
The first grant of land assigned to Jarvis and his wife, after their arrival in New London, was "at the top of the hill called 'Meeting House Hill, by a little run of fresh water'. In the early settlement of Pequot, the Indian name of the place, it was customary to grant land to settlers by a general vote and joint consent of the townsmen. The usual grant was six acres for a house lot and a parcel of meadow on the upland, at a distance from the home lot. Each planter, as a settler was often called, was thus provided with pasturage and farm land and his home was situated where group protection would be readily available in times of danger from Indian attacks. "The lands in these situations on the sound and on the river, being those which the inhabitants could immediately make available, were the first divided. The upland on the river furnished planting fields, and the Poquonuck plains meadow and grass land." 5

One among the settlers was assigned to be the keeper of the herds who returned the planters livestock each evening and allowed their departure to pastures each morning. A certain portion of the town was used for the safe-keeping of the animals at night." .. . with the keeper going forth with them at sun

half an hour high and bringing them home half an hour before the sunset . . . The keeper for his paines is to have 12 s. a week - for his pay he is to have 1 pound of butter for every cow, and the rest of his pay in wompum or Indian corne, at 2 s. 6 d. p. bushell in the month of October."[6] It was important to the settlers that the herds be kept safe from the Indians.

"The Indians of the area differed very little from those in other sections of the country. They led the same nomadic life, here today, there tomorrow, with few ties to bind them long to any place . . ." The Pequod War that had been fought in 1637-8 had settled the many tribes in Connecticut and for a period of time before the King Philips War of 1675, nothing appears on record that the settlers suffered or felt any alarm from their savage neighbors, except in a few isolated or single cases of murder. Most of the Indian disturbances came about by conflicts arising among the separate tribes themselves.

Alfred Mudge tells us that in the history of New London we find that Jarvis Mudge was one of the thirty-six grantees, or planters, to whom Home Lots were originally granted in the year 1649. Jarvis and his wife, Rebecca, did not remain on the land at the top of the hill later called 'Meeting House Hill', but settled to build their home in the town of Pequot (New London). Jarvis had given a portion of their higher ground property to the townspeople for a grave site.



The same source gives the following information, "In July 1651, the names of those who "whrought at the Mill Dam are listed, among whom the name Jarvis Mudge appears." From this entry we can assume that Jarvis had a natural and real interest in the development of wind and water powers for mills and other industrial endeavors. He, with others, was laying the foundation for a better New England future.

> ". . .The family of Jarvis Mudge, his descendents, seem to have possessed a peculiar attachment to hydraulic power, down to the fifth generation. The record shows that most of them have been concerned in mills or machinery as a principal business, and have removed from place to place, wherever the water-power and the new settlement demanded their energies. They have been an honest, independent yeomanry, those who form the strength of the republic . . . All of the name have the same physical characteristics. Drinking, smoking, and the use of tobacco, are rare among the name. The personal conformation in the different families is the same, - of medium height, and weight of about 175 to 200 lbs. at 50 or 60 years of age; the complection light, and the length of life is beyond the average of the world." 7

Jarvis was an exception to the long life average of the Mudges. If estimates of his birth are correct he was married at age 34 and died about three years later at age 37 leaving Rebecca, his wife, a widow for the second time and his son, Micah, two years old and his son Moses, born the same year that Jarvis died. It is almost ironical that the land which he had given to the town for a grave site became the resting place, so soon, for Jarvis himself. According to the history of the town, an abstract dated March 17, 1652, brought before the townsmen, referred to the Jarvis Mudge Will:

> "The decease of Jarvis Mudge probably occurred two or three days before the reading of the Will. It is the first death in the plantation to which any illusion is made on record now extant . . . Jarvis was undoubtedly interred in the old burial-ground, as it lay contiguous to his land and had not then been inclosed. It is probable that his were the first relics left to moulder in that venerable place . . ." 8

Wills and inventories were at that time recorded upon the town books and sent to the Assistant's Court at Hartford for probate. Only the following words remain on the Hartford books, "June 18, 1653; Liberty is granted that the land belonging to the Widdow Mudge, at Pequot, may be sould for the paing of debts and the bettering the children's portyons." 9 On the 28th of June 1653 the town records of New London show two deeds in the sale of the Jarvis Mudge property, signed by Rebecca's mark (x) . Rebecca, with her family of four children, two Elsen girls, and two very young boys, Micah and Moses, moved to Wethersfield, Conn., Rebecca's former home, and none by the name of Mudge remained in New London.

In the writings of James J. Goodwin in 1915 the transfer of the widow, Rebecca Mudge, is clarified. We find that Rebecca sold her land and house lot June 28, 1653, to Richard Smith of Wethersfield and he in turn in 1659 sold to Robert Royce (1-1). 10

All high hopes and dreams that Jarvis and Rebecca may have had faded and she was left to make the best of an unfortunate turn of events. It is regretable that history does not record the merits of brave women as adequately as it does the achievements of men, though it falls short of full mention in either

case. We are comforted to know that she traveled the long distance from New London to Wethersfield over rough and dangerous terrain to be with the familiar faces of her past.

The DAR record gives us a glimpse into what happened to Rebecca after she returned to Wethersfield. "She married Nathaniel Greensmith and with him was executed for witchcraft, Jan. 25, 1662." [11]

Seemingly, Rebecca had "jumped from the frying pan into the fire." We may never know the circumstances that led to such a tragic ending of her life and our hearts go out as we meditate the cruelty of a privation of emotional needs and understandings that must have rent the lives of the victims. The early Puritans were inclined to interpret any variant act as the work of the Devil and that extermination was the only solution.

When New England was struggling to expand its settlements during the 17th and 18th centuries; when much of the country was still an unbroken wilderness; when a journey from Hartford to New Haven was an event to be given weighty concern, and the forests were the abode of wild beasts and savage Indians, it is not surprising that imagination should have been active in conjuring unknown terrors and that the beliefs in witches, which from time immemorial had been the common heritage of the people of all lands, should have been particularly prevalent in the towns of New England.

It is difficult in this age of wide education and altruism to understand this superstition, and still harder to realize that many of the towns in New England had its acute attacks of this mental phenomenon. Indeed, all of the occurrences are not mentioned in history and seldom do we hear of the name of a victim of execution.

The horrors of executions that culminated in Salem, Boston and Plymouth prior to 1692 are listed in recorded trials and from then on the cases became fewer in number.

In those days speaking lightly of dignitaries was not permitted; in fact, our present free and easy manner of criticizing the acts of our public servants would have been looked upon with horror and as something not to be tolerated.

We are not enlightened by the records of these trials on what may have motivated an individual or caused him so far to forget himself that he was guilty of some rather strong expressions regarding some member or members of his community or to make so serious a charge that, right or wrong, he was placd in an unfavorable position. He (or she) may have been a person of violent temper, or he may have been provoked beyond endurance by the acts and gossips of his neighbors and subsequent investigations by the "townsmen."

It is somewhat difficult today to realize the condition under which our ancestors lived in those early Puritan days. To us, now, it would be intolerable. The organization of each community was aptly described by the old Puritan gibe, "The world belongs to the saints, and we are the saints" and woe betide the poor unfortunate who had fallen under the ban of his fellow church members.

In those days New England men meant as they professed. Their convictions laid a wide basis for imagination and emotion. They interpreted the scriptures and formed theological theories that explains much of their morbid vigilance. Everyone felt at liberty to spy upon the acts of his neighbor, and that this was thoroughly done, no one will doubt who has made an examination of early church records. What today is considered the act of a busybody was then felt to be the part of a conscientious man's duty. It can easily be imagined that life in such a community was not always pleasant.

We cannot tell whether a witchcraft accusation was the result of the underhanded work of malicious persons, or simply an exposion of repeated, unabaited frustrations brought on by misunderstandings or a lack of communication. Mental anguish is a vicious distorter of stability and sanity.

1. #56 preface pp. xii - xiii
2. ibid p. 33
3. ibid p. 30
4. ibid p. 32
5. #5, p. 61
6. ibid, p. 82
7. #56, p. 31, Intro. pp. iv, v; #5, pp. 82, 83
8. ibid p. 31
9. #5, p. 83
10. #18, p. 296
11. #71, p. 77