

THOMAS SKINNER JR. (1645-between 1722-32)
 MARY PRATT (1643-1704)

In 'New England Families' by William Richard Cutter is found the following brief review that might serve as an introduction to the lives of Thomas Skinner, son of Thomas the immigrant, and his wife Mary (Gould) Skinner. (7-49)

"Thomas Skinner was born in Subdeanery parish Chichester, England, July 25, 1645. His parents came to America when he and his brother, Abraham, were young boys, and settled in Malden, Mass., a settlement to the north of, but in the vicinity of Boston. He married Mary, daughter of Richard and Mary Pratt, who had also immigrated to New England some time between 1630-1640. The Pratts were from Malden county Essex, England, and settled first in Charlestown, Mass. Mary was born in Charlestown July or Sept. 30, 1643 and when 12 years of age her family, the Pratts, moved to Malden, Mass.

"Thomas and Mary remained in Malden where all of their eleven children were born. Deacon Thomas Skinner, as he was called, removed with his wife, sons Richard, Benjamin, Ebenezer, Nathaniel and daughter Abigail, to Colchester, Connecticut, where he was one of the original proprietors (map #5). His name and that of his son, Ebenezer, frequently appear in the early records. He held various town offices and served on important committees." ¹

Cutter's review is brief but other authors have provided us with details so that we are able to get a fair picture of the family's whereabouts and activities. It was about 1664 when Thomas, age 17, married Mary Pratt, age 21. Thomas' father deeded him a fair share of the family property, along with goods and cattle, at the time of his marriage. This information is derived from a memorandu of a family settlement wherein the acknowledgment was made:

"Memorandu. I Thomas Skinner have formerly given unto son Thomas Skinner about the time of marriage, land and since in rents, goods and cattell besides the forty shillings to be paid to him by son, Abraham." ² In the settlement, Abraham fell heir to the rest of his father's property with the stipulation that he or his heirs assume full responsibility in food, clothing, etc. to his ageing parents, Thomas and Lydia.

The listing of Thomas and Mary's children is given by Natalie R. Fernald in "The Skinner Kinsman," a list that agrees with both the DAR record and that of William R. Cutter.

- "1. Mary Skinner, b. Nov. 3, 1666
2. Sgt. Thomas Skinner, b. Nov. 3, 1668, md. abt. 1694, Hannah (Carpenter ?) Removed to Norton, Mass., and was the first schoolmaster there; began teaching 1719. His Will was probated May 19, 1750.
3. Abraham Skinner, b. June 16, 1671, md. Abigail, dau. of Benj. Chamberlain, was of Oxford Mass., in 1713 (removing to Colchester, Conn. about 1722)
4. John Skinner, b. April 5, 1673, md. abt. 1696, Sarah. Removed to Norton, d. April 8, 1754
5. Richard Skinner, b. Jan 2, 1675/6, md. Nov. 24, 1708, Hannah Pratt, his cousin. Removed to Colchester, Conn., d. before 1720
6. Hannah Skinner, (twin of Joseph) b. Jan. 13, 1678, d. Oct. 21, 1728

7. Joseph Skinner, (twin of Hannah) b. Jan. 13, 1678, d. Jan 18, 1725
8. Benjamin Skinner, Jan. 30, 1681, md. Elizabeth Dixon. Removed to Colchester, Conn. She d. Dec. 1, 1753, at Hebron, Conn. He d. same place, June 2, 1750.
9. Ebenezer Skinner b. April 23, 1684, md. Sarah Lord. Removed to Colchester. He d. 1755.
10. Nathaniel Skinner, b. Jan. 27, 1686, md. (1) June 3, 1706, Mary Gillett, dau. of Josiah Gillett, June 13, 1706. She d. Oct. 11, 1740 in Colchester, Conn. He removed to Sharon, Conn., md. (2) Mrs. Content Fuller.
11. Abigail Skinner b. Feb. 17, 1691, md. at Colchester, Conn. Jan 13 or 17, 1708, Ebenezer Mudge (7-47). He was born in Northampton, Mass. Feb. 26, 1683, and died April 21, 1758. She died in Sharon, Conn. Mar. 6 or 8, 1765" ³ (See pp. 613 and 614)

Some of Thomas and Mary's older children remained in Malden, Mass. when their parents decided to move to the newer areas in Connecticut and settled at Colchester (map #5). Those of his family who went with their parents were in ages Richard, 25; Benjamin, 19; Ebenezer, 16, Nathaniel, 14 and Abigail 9. Jan. 21, 1702, Thomas was granted land in Round Meadow and other lands in May of that same year. It was in 1704 that his father, age 76, passed away in his home-town of Malden, Mass.

After four years in the new settlement Mary, the wife and mother, died, March 26, 1704 and was buried in Colchester, Conn. The town was barely seeing the beginnings of a permanent settlement. Little did Mary know when she left Malden to pioneer a new wilderness home, that the sight of the older members of her family was her last. Her youngest child Abigail was 13.

The journey from Malden to Colchester had been a tremendous undertaking. The distance and convenience of travel now makes it seem of little consequence but at that early time the people who moved into the interior was made either by waterways or through the thick of wilderness areas or both. If the Skinners traveled the longer distance by boat from Boston, they entered the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, avoiding the protruding arm of Cape Cod and proceeded along the shore-line of the Nantucket Sound, Rhode Island and Long Island Sound to the harbor port of New London at the mouth of the Thames River, Connecticut. Small water craft might have taken them up rivers to Colchester but most likely the interior travel, which was a distance of about 25 miles from the harbor, was done by horseback and cart. If they traveled overland from Malden the distance was less across country but by primitive modes of travel, cutting through underbrush, crossing streams, following an ox cart as they walked or rode horseback, would have been hazardous and difficult. In any case, the endeavor to settle new areas further inland was a great undertaking.

The rewards of the sacrifices made by these early people can only be measured in terms of future blessings enjoyed by posterity. Such rewards can only be expressed in the pride and appreciation for those people who suffered hardships to settle this great land. There may come a time when we can say to Mary

and Thomas, in sublime verbage, "Thank you for the strength that you upheld through some trying ordeals and for that one more child, your 11th, that you named Abigail, who, like yourselves, had a large family of admirable and respected citizenry, bringing honor to their lines of ancestry and pride to their descendants.

In speaking of Thomas and his father, the immigrant, Cutter makes the following statement, "The name Skinner was brought to New England by two immigrants from England, both of whom left a numerous progeny. Thomas Skinner was an early settler at Malden Massachusetts, coming from Chichester, England, before 1652. Another immigrant, his son Thomas, was prominent in the settlement of Connecticut and descendants of both have spread throughout the United States, where they have been distinguished for the Yankee qualities of enterprise and thrift, and were usually found to be industrious, prosperous and useful citizens. Several sections of the Empire State (New York) are indebted to this family for pioneers who were active in promoting material and moral growth of the settlement." 4

Mrs. Natalie R. Fernald made a thorough research of the Records of Colchester, Conn. and printed "The Skinner Kinsman" in 1923. Her extracts, concerning Thomas and Mary (Pratt) Skinner, are details which were inclusive of all the information available and thus far researched by the 'DAR,' 'Barbour Collection,' the works of 'Jacobus' and the vital records of the State of Conn. Her extracts include such as:

"Thomas Skinner, Richard Skinner, Benjamin Skinner and Ebenezer Skinner were among the first proprietors of Colchester.

"May 1702, granted and layd out unto Thomas Skinner a home lot in length 160 rods, in bredth 21 rods, bounded east by the street, north by John Waters his home lot, west on the Commons - further, Thomas Skinner hath granted and laid out for his first division 60 Akers Joyning Micaiell Tantors land on the south-east side, on the east of the littell Meadow. Bounded it by a run of water, by Micaiell Taintor's land, so runeth westerly by said Tantor and the high-way 138 Rods, to bounds set by the highway.

"Dec. 18, 1704. Thomas Skinner and others were chosen Townsmen. At a town meeting held in Colchester Dec. 29, 1703, Thomas Skiner was chosen Constable for ye year ensuing. April 15, 1705, Thomas Skinner granted five acres of meadow in the little meadow.

"Further to Thomas Skinner his 2nd Division 100 acres, on the northwest side of Moodus Road and on the West side of Charles Williams second Division; beginning at bounds set in Moodus road and so southwest near the road 100 rods to a black tree marked; then northwest eight score rods to a bound set in the swamp on the west side of a maple tree marked; then northerly 100 rods to a bound set in the valley; then southeasterly, leaving a way between it and Charles Williams land, 8 score rods to first bound. Laid out Feb. 13, 1706/7." 5

The above data is pertinent information and is revealing of primitive surveying methods as seemed practical under the circumstances of the day. It is interesting, too, to note that after the death of his wife in 1704, Thomas made land changes to convey home lots and farm grounds for his maturing sons.

"Mar. 29, 1709. Thomas Skinner of Colchester to son Nathaniel Skinner of same place, my home lot of 21 acres, also meadow in the Round meadow, 30 acres of upland and one half of all my other divisions laid out to my 200 right in Colchester.

"Dec. 3, 1713. Deacon Thomas Skinner of Colchester exchanges lands with Richard Skinner of Colchester, 30 acres bounded by common, highway and Micael Taintor's etc . . .

"July 19, 1715, Thomas Skinner to his son Ebenezer Skinner, both of Colchester, one home lot in Colchester bounded east on Town St., west with commons, north on home lot of John Waters, south on home lot of said Ebenezer, 21 rods wide by half a mile in length, with house, etc." ⁶

We see by these transactions, of which the ones above were not all, that Thomas was deeding much if not all of his properties to his sons.

"In the trustee's deed of Colchester, dated April 28, 1713, appear the names of Thomas Skinner and his sons, Richard, Benjamin and Ebenezer. No record of Thomas' death has been found but in May, 1722 he was released of all taxes due to the publick treasurer as had been listed in the year 1720." ⁷ We can only say, as is recorded by Fernald, that he died after 1722 which would indicate his age as over 77.

Thomas and Mary's daughter, Abigail, married Ebenezer Mudge of Lebanon and Hebron Conn., neighboring towns of Colchester, in 1708 (7-47). They moved to Sharon Connecticut in 1737, after all 12 of their children were born, and lived there for the remaining years of their lives. Abigail's brother, Nathaniel, and his wife and family were also among others who helped settle this beautiful area to the west. (See map #14) Thus we find that migrating to new areas, obtaining new land and helping establish new settlements had become a compulsive thing in America.

1. #21 p. 1287
2. #57 p. 6
3. ibid pp. 8-9
4. #152 Vol. 3 p. 1273
5. #57 pp. 9-11
6. ibid p. 10
7. ibid