DAVID ATWATER (1615-1692)
DAMARIS SAYRE (-1691)

David must have been among those wealthier proprietors of New Haven, for his father's extensive estate in Kent County, England had been settled by 1636 of which David and his brother Joshua had fallen heirs. Just what sacrifices had to be made we may never know, but the price must not have been too high when we consider the risks of imprisonment and the persecutions that were being heaped upon the followers of Rev. Davenport, a strong dissenter of the established Church of England who was preaching his doctrines in London and who was forced to find safety by removing to New England.

From the "Willard-Bradley Memoirs," it is written that:

> "David Atwater was one of the first planters of New Haven and was represented in the first divisions of lands among the settlers. A farm was assigned him in the "Neck" as the tract between Mill and Quinnipiac Rivers was called, upon which it is believed he lived till his death, Oct. 5, 1692." [1]

In 1927 Francis Atwater wrote a more elaborate narrative on his immigrant ancestor, David Atwater, that is worthy of repeat in its entirety here:

> "David Atwater, son of Thomas and Susan Narsin, baptized in Lenham Church October 8, 1615. He was born in Royton in Lenham, England, and in the month in which he became twenty-one years of age, October, 1636, his father died, and his mother died scarcely more than two months later, in January, 1637. In less than six months from the latter event, June 26, 1637, the brothers, Joshua and David, with their sister, Ann, arrived in Boston. It cannot be doubted that their arrangements for removal, so hastily made at that time of general discontent and apprehension in church and state affairs, involved large pecuniary sacrifices.
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> "It is seen that David was in his twenty-second year when he came to New England in 1637. If he was one of those who accompanied Mr. Eaton to Quinnipiac in the autumn of that year, he returned to Boston, for only seven of the company, of whom his brother Joshua was one, remained at Quinnipiac for the winter. It may be believed that David and his sister Ann, remaining in Boston that winter, sailed with the company for their new home in the Spring of 1638. David signed the plantation covenant June 4, 1639, the day of the meeting of the constituent assembly in Mr. Newman's barn, which was the commencement or foundation of the Colony of New Haven (see appendix #7, "The New Haven Covenant").
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> "He was unmarried previous to 1643, when he appears alone on the list of planters, with a valuation upon his estate of L500, 'according to which he will pay his proportion in all Rates and Public charges from time to time to be assessed for civil uses, and expect Lands in all divisions which shall generally be made to the planters.' He was one of twenty-nine whose estates were on the list at L500 or more.
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> "He married Damaris Sayre, daughter of Thomas Sayre, of Southampton, L.I., before March 10, 1646-7, the date of the General Court, when the name of "David Atwater's wife" was read among those seated in the meeting-house. She died April 7, 1691. Upon the union of the New Haven and Connecticut Colonies, consummated at a General Court held at Hartford, May 11, 1665, David Atwater was the first of the New Haven Colony who was sworn a freeman of the united colony. He died October 5, 1692." [2]

As was stated earlier, David came into possession of property in England that set him in favorable financial circumstances. Though we can be sure great sacrifices must have been made as he and his brother and sister left their homeland in such haste, but the legalities of inheritances cannot be disregarded and we can be sure he came with more than a modest fortune. In the "American Genealogist" Vol I the following is recorded:

> "Besides his (David's) interest in his father's estate in which he would retain the homestead, he became entitled in the Will of his uncle and grandfather, upon the death of his Uncle George in 1622, when he was seven years old, to the place 'called the Uynne, with all the appurtanences in Lenham, England, and in the same Will, upon the death of his father, to the lands called "Parkfields" in Lenham and Randalls in Boughton, Malherbe, England, and by the Will of his Uncle George upon the death of his Aunt Ann, wife of his Uncle George, to the 'house, barns and buildings with all the lands thereunto belonging' at a place called Grants Gate in Royton, England." 3

It is understandable that David was like many other notable English men of means - ready to make an investment in the talked-of land of opportunity.

> "The country between Saybrook and Fairfield had become known to the English in 1637 by means of the Pequot Indian War and an exploring party, led by Theophilus Eaton, a close friend of John Davenport, vicar of St. Stephen's Church in London and Puritan leader of a nonconformist group who had migrated to New England. The explorers left Boston, August 31, and came by water to Quinnipiac. The group was so well satisfied with what they found, that they left seven of their number to spend the winter, preparing for the permanent occupation of the place. In the ensuing April, the whole company arrived from Boston. It now included not only those who had come from London with Davenport and Eaton; but a company from Hereford and other western counties of England. They had sailed from Bristol, in the 'James' under the leadership of Peter Prudden, a nonconforming minister of the Church of England, and had united themselves in Boston to the London Company. In addition there were a few residents of Massachusetts who were disposed to join the new enterprise at New Haven. On the Sunday following their arrival at Quinnipiac, the company assembled twice for public worship. Such worship was ever after maintained in the town, and about a year after the arrival of the settlers, or planters as they styled themselves, the erection of a House of Worship was commenced . . .In November a formal purchase of land was made from the Indians. . .
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> "The Indian name of the place now covered by the City of New Haven was Quinnipiac. It is said that in the language of the aboriginal inhabitants, Quin is equivalent to long; Nippe, to water; and Ohke, to place. Quinnipiac was, therefore, in their conception, the long-water-place. To one who stands on the summit of East Rock Park, and follows with his eye the silver thread which seems to lie on the flat meadows of the Quinnipiac Valley, and widens itself out into the spacious harbor and more spacious Sound, the propriety of the aboriginal name is apparent. It was this peculiarity of the landscape - offering easy transportation from one neighborhood to another, and abundant forage with no other labor than to cut and stack the hay spontaneously growing on the meadows - which attracted to the place its first European settlers . . ." 4

While the divisions of land was in progress to satisfy the many who had arrived to obtain property and to build homes, the name of the plantation was changed. By order of the General court held the first day of September, 1640, the town was called New Haven. It had been referred to by ship passengers and relayed back to England by the captains of the ships as, "The Fair Haven." At the sight of the harbor people recognized it as a haven, indeed, for immigrants.

The town from the first aspired to be a colony but only a few short years passed before she joined hands with the settlement of Hartford and Connecticut became the larger colony. Gradually the word plantation fell into disuse, and the word town took its place.

It is interesting to note that David Atwater was not the only ancestor who shared in the founding of New Haven. William Ives (4-10), William Peck (7-71), John Brockett (7-81), and John Moss (7-73) as well as David Atwater are all listed in a schedule exhibiting the names of the proprietors of the plantation of New Haven in 1641. The listing showed the number of persons each had in his family; the amount of his estate; the number of acres he was entitled to have upland near the town, of meadow, of land in the neck between Mill and Quinnipiac Rivers, and of upland remote from the town; and the amount of his annual tax.

By omitting the tax column for want of room, the schedule is transcribed here that the reader may become acquainted with our ancestors who commenced the settlement of New Haven.

Name of the Planter	Persons Numbered	Estates	Land in Division	In the Neck	Meadow	Land-2nd Division
John Brockett (7-81)	1	15	3¼	½+24	1¼	5
William Peck (7-71)	4	12	10½+16	2+16	1½+16	10¼
John Moss (7-73)	3	10	8	1½+16	2	8
William Ives (4-10)	2	25	6¼	1¼	2¼	9
Joshua Atwater	2	300	20	4	16	64
David Atwater (7-68)	1	500	-	-	24¼	141 [5]

Others of our ancestors who were early settlers in New Haven but who were not listed in this earliest land division for reasons of absence at the time, not in full fellowship in the church (a land owners qualification), or were later arrivals were: John Austin (7-64), William Bradley (7-76), Samuel Cooke (4-6), Edward Parker (4-9), and Nathaniel Merriman (4-13). We can be fairly certain, because of their early residence in the place, that they were acquainted with one another if not living within close proximity of one another.

In the center of the Market Place was the Meeting-house. It was of wood, was fifty feet square, had a roof shaped like a truncated pyramid, and was surmounted by a tower and turret. Inside the meeting house was an orderly arrangement of pews assigned to the particular planters who were avowed members in good standing. This seating is shown in (map #25), as given by the research of E. E. Atwater in 1887. David Atwater was seated in Row 4, second seat in men's middle section. His wife, Damaris, was assigned to Row 7, first seat in the women's middle section. We are told in the same explanation that blocks, stools and chairs were brought in and placed at the end of the seats on both sides of the alleys for young persons to sit on. As the congregation grew, galleries were built to make room for the young men and young women who formerly used the seats at the rear of the meeting house. "There is reason for believing that the boys clustered together on the gallery stairs, and that though not allowed to wear their hats, as their fathers were, they sometimes disturbed the 'exercise' with their exuberant vitality." [6]

The town was alerted to the hour of the Sabbath meeting by the beat of drums.

> "The first drum was beaten about eight o'clock in the tower of the meeting-house and through the streets of the town. When the second drum sounded, an hour later, families came forth from their dwellings and walked in orderly procession to the House of God; children following their parents to the door, though not allowed to sit with them in the assembly after they were of sufficient age to be separated from their mothers. The ministers in the pulpit wore gowns and bands, as they had done in England; their Puritan scruples reaching not to all the badges of official distinction which they had been accustomed to see and use . . .
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> "The only other public buildings on the Market place Square were a school-house and a watch-house. The latter was for the comfort of the watchmen who were on duty at night, on lecture days and on Sundays during the time of solemn worship." 7

The settlers shared in the responsibility of clearing the land for the Square and in piling wood for the use of the four sergeants selected to the business of the watch in cold weather.

> "New Haven excelled all the other plantations of New England in the elegance and costliness of its domestic architecture. Hubbard, the early historian, speaks of its 'error in great buildings' in these words: 'They laid out too much of their stocks and estates in building of fair and stately houses, wherein they at the first outdid the rest of the country.' Tradition reports that the house of Theophilus Eaton was so large as to have nineteen fireplaces, and that it was lofty as well as large. Its principal apartment, the entrance hall, was sufficiently spacious to accommodate the whole family when assembled at meals and at prayers . . . There was a parlor adjoining the hall where the adults and guests might retire from the crowd and bustle of the hall . . . A study might provide use as a library, counting-house or office. Other rooms were the winter kitchen, the summer kitchen, the buttery and the pantry and always the sleeping apartments in the second story . . . " 8

Of course there was no other house in the plantation equal to that of Governor Eaton but there were several dwellings built with equal stateliness though perhaps not as large as the house of Eaton. We may be sure, as we consider the wealth of the inhabitants and that which David Atwater had inherited, that his home was one of those of distinction in the neighborhood.

> "The average dwelling-house of the first generation of planters was supported by a frame of heavy timber. White oak was a favorite wood for this purpose, and some of the larger pieces were considerably more than a foot square. Such a house had a stone chimney measuring ten feet in diameter where it passed through the first floor; being even larger in the cellar. The fireplace in one of the apartments of the first floor being six or eight feet long. A door in the middle of the front side of the house opened into a hall, which contained a stairway to upper rooms and opposite on the right and left of the hall were front rooms used as parlors but furnished with beds to provide hospitality to visitors who were always frequent in a new country, where all travelers came and went as they migrated to find new places for a home. The apartment most used by the family, in which they cooked and ate their food, and in winter gathered about the spacious fireplace, was in the rear of the chimney.

"The frame of such a house was covered with clapboards or with shingles, and after some experience the planters learned to prefer shingles to the thatch as a covering for the roof. The floors were of thick oak boards fastened with wooden pins. The rooms were plastered on the sides; but the joists and floor above were exposed to view. The window sashes, bearing glass cut into small diamond-shaped panes and set with lead, were hung with hinges to the window-frames and opened outward. The doors were of upright boards, fastened together with battens, and had wooden latches. Some of the outside doors were made to open and part in the middle, fastened by a wooden bar and secured by iron staples.

"Lower in rank than these framed buildings were small log-houses that could be raised in less time and with less expenditure and labor.

"In the seventeenth century, as compared with the present day, household furniture was rude and scanty, even in England; and doubtless emigration to a new country deprived the planters of New England of some conveniences which they might have possessed if they had remained at home." 9

Most pieces of furniture had to be hewn by hand from the timbers that were plentiful and close at hand. Clocks were a rarity and only found in dwellings of the opulent and the measuring of time was generally done by noon-marks and sun-dials. Forks were only beginning to make an appearance on the tables in England at this time so we can be sure they were not in common use in New England. Spoons used were commonly of a base metal called alchymy and table dishes were generally of wood or of pewter. Porringers were small, bowl shaped vessels with handles attached to them for holding the porridge served for breakfast or supper. Meat was brought to the table on platters of wood or pewter from which it was transferred to square pieces of board or if a lathe were present could be cut into circular shapes as its porcelain successors.

"In all but the most wealthy families, food was cooked in the apartment where it was eaten, and at the large fireplace. A trammel in the chimney, by means of its hood, which could be moved up and down according to the amount of fuel in use at the time, held the pot or kettle at the proper distance above the fire. At one end of the fireplace was an oven in the chimney. Supplementary to these instruments for boiling and baking, were a gridiron, a long handled frying-pan, and a spit for roasting before the fire. At tne end of the room, pewter platters, porringers and basins, when not in use, were displayed on open shelves; and hanging against the wall were utinsels of tin and brass, the brightness of the metal showing forth the comparative merit of the housekeeping.

"During the early years of the settlement, domestic products were lacking but there was an abundance and variety of game that became the prize of the sharpshooter. The air was perceptibly darkened with pigeons; the rivers were full of fish and on the sea-shore there were plenty of clams, oysters and mussels. Poultry, swine and beef soon multiplied to such an extent that within ten years from the founding of New Haven had become articles of export. Tillage soon produced besides the maize, the beans, and the squashes indeginous to the country, almost every variety of food to which they had been accustomed in England.

"The diet for breakfast and supper was frequently porridge made of meat and of peas, beans or other vegetables. Frequently it was mush and milk. A boiled pudding of Indian meal, cooked in the same pot with the meat and vegetables which followed it, was often the first and principal course at dinner. Tea and coffee had not yet come into general use, but beer was the common drink of Englishmen at home and in America. A brew-house was regarded as an essential part of a homestead in the New Haven colony, and beer was on the table as regularly as bread

"While the breakfast, dinner and supper described above may be taken as a specimen of the diet frequently appearing on the table of a New England family in the seventeenth century, they are by no means to be regarded as fixed by a rule from which there was no variation. There were flesh-days and there were fish-days in every week; and on Saturday, the oven being heated for baking bread, a pot of beans was put in, which, being allowed to remain for twenty-four hours, furnished a warm supper for the family when they returned from public worship. There was variation from and addition to the ordinary fare on those numerous occasions, when friends, traveling on horseback, stopped to spend the night, or to rest in the middle of the day. Then the table was burdened with variety and abundance according to the means of the family and the providence of the mistress. Feasting reached its acme on the day of the annual thanksgiving, when there was such plenty of roast meats, and so extraordinary an outcome from the oven, that ordinary diet was for some days afterward displayed by the re mains of the feast.

"Rejecting Christmas, the Puritans established in its place the observance of Thanksgiving. Here they recounted the blessings of the year, and kinfolk gathered to unite in worship and to spend the remaining hours of the day in feasting and frolic.

"Family worship was an important feature of domestic life in a Puritan household. It was important because of its frequency, regularity, and seriousness. Whenever the family came to the table for breakfast, dinner or supper, there was a grace before meat, and when they left it, a grace after meat, every person standing by his chair while the blessing was asked and the thanks were given. The day was begun with worship, which included the reading of Scripture and prayer, and ended with a similar service, all standing during the prayer. . .

"The simple, regular life of a planter's family was favorable to health. As compared with Old England in the seventeenth century, New Haven might have been called a healthy region. England was then ravaged by the plague and planters in New England considered themselves to be in a much less deadly atmosphere. Nevertheless they were afflicted with sickness, Malaria having become prevalent especially in New Haven. Much has been written of the depression which settled upon the town in consequence of this disease as well as the disappointment that the settlers felt because of the failure in regard to expected commerce . . .

"Social life among the planters of the New Haven Colony, had for its basis contemporary social life in England, but was modified by Puritanism and by emigration to a wilderness. They brought with them English ideas of social rank, of the duties of parents and children, of the reserve and seclusion proper for young women, and of the supervision under which the young people of different sexes might associate. The people of New England did not originate the public sentiments after coming. They were the convictions of prior generations which brought with it the peculiarities which had grown from their earlier sources. A peculiarity of the Puritans was seriousness. Such convictions as they cherished necessarily produced a seriousness of manner. . .

"Removal to a wilderness influenced social life. The mutual dependence and helpfulness usually found in a new settlement was one peculiar feature of the social system incident to the New Haven plantation. News from home was communicated to the neighbors; letters were passed from hand to hand; corn was husked and houses were 'raised' by neighborly kindness. The whole plantation sympathized with a family afflicted with sickness, and the neighbors assisted them in nursing and watching. Families entertained travelers after the manner of Christians of the first centuries. In spite of the usual neighborliness there was a great tolerance for the manifestations of social inequality so strikingly illustrated in 'the seating of the meeting-house'. Each person seemingly arranged with consideration to rank . . .

> "The people were much confined at home during the week by domestic industry but Sunday was a day to gather together not only to worship but to gratify their social longings. It was from the pulpit that they heard the announcement of intended marriages; with "bills" asking the prayers of the church for the sick, for the recently bereaved, for those about to make a voyage to Boston; or with "bills" returning thanks for recovery from a dangerous illness, or for a safe return from a journey or a voyage. Besides such personal items as reached their ears by way of the pulpit, others came to them in a more private way, as they spoke with acquaintances dwelling in a different quarter or at the farms. It was a satisfaction to persons who during the week had seen only the inmates of their own houses and a few neighbors, even to look on such an assembly." 10

David Atwater was about 30 years of age when he and Damaris Sayre were married and about four years had passed since the time he had purchased his share of the division of properties in the new settlement of New Haven. It is likely that David had improved upon his land and he along with his brother Joshua, who had married earlier and who also had purchased property, had most likely built places of residence.

The distance from New Haven to the Sayre home on Long Island was about fifty miles but a boat journey across the Long Island Sound was somewhat more distant as one would have to travel around Orient Point at Plum Island to get into the Peconic Bay from where Southhamton could be reached either by horseback or team and wagon or by foot. It would be of romantic interest to know of the courtship of David and Damaris - whether Damaris met David on a visit to New Haven or whether David had met Damaris on a visit to Long Island. We can only wish that a more intimate knowledge were ours as we ponder what few circumstances have been preserved to help us feel a personal relationship to them.

Damaris was the daughter of Thomas Sayre (7-78) of Southampton, Long Island. Any record of her mother's name has not been found but the story of her parent's migration from England to Long Island is an interesting one. Considering the availability of boat travel between Long Island and the mainland it is quite possible that frequent visits were made between the two colonies.

New Haven became the permanent home of David and Damaris where they reared their family of ten children and remained for the extent of their lives. All ten of the children of David and Damaris are listed for us in the DAR research:

1. Mercy Atwater, b. Feb. 29, 1647-8; md. John Austin (7-64)
2. Damaris Atwater, b. Nov. 12, 1648, died Dec. 14, 1711; md. Nov. 5, 1667 John Punderson
3. David Atwater, b. 13 July 1650, died 10 Jan. 1735-6, md. Joanne ______ She died Dec. 3, 1722 (7-82)
4. Joshua Atwater, b. Jan 11, 1652; md. June 24, 1680, Lydia Rockwell, who died Nov. 27, 1681
5. John Atwater, b. Nov. 1, 1654, died 1748; md. (1) Sept. 13, 1682, Abigail, dau. of Moses Manfield and Mercy Glover (2) Nov. 27, 1718, Mary, widow of John Beach.
6. Jonathan Atwater, b. July 12, 1656, died 3 June 1726; md. 1 June 1681, Ruth, dau. of Jeremiah Peck and Joanne Kitchell

7. Abigail Atwater, b. Mar. 3, 1660; md. Oct. 7, 1684, Nathaniel Jones
8. Mary Atwater, b. Mar. 31, 1662; md. (1) Oct. 22, 1688, Ichabod Stow, (2) David Robinson
9. Samuel Atwater, b. Sept. 17, 1664, died June 17, 1742; md. July 6, 1691, Sarah, dau. of John Alling and Ellen Bradley
10. Ebenezer Atwater, b. Jan 13, 1666; md. Dec. 9, 1691, Abigail, dau. of James Heaton and ________Street."[11]

As we link each generation to the next on a pedigree chart, we see that David Atwater becomes the 8th great grandparent of the writer. In fact, a double line of ancestors can be traced by connections to two of the children of David and Damaris, namely, Mercy and David Jr. Atwater. Only by viewing the graphic pedigree could this relationship of blood lines become clear to the reader's understanding (chart p. 688 - common ancestry of two separate lines.)

Damaris died Apr. 7, 1691, and David died a year and a half later, Oct. 5, 1692, at the age of about 77 years. Many of their descendants remained in New Haven for several generations and some, no doubt, even to this day.

1. #106, Vol. 4, p. 3
2. ibid, Vol 2, p. 33
3. #71, p. 15
4. #111 Chap. 1, p. 1
5. ibid pp. 10-11
6. ibid p. 13
7. ibid
8. ibid p. 14
9. ibid p. 15
10. ibid pp. 16-20
11. #71 p. 16