

## THOMAS SAYRE (1597-1670)

A brief coverage of Thomas Sayre is given by what the DAR records have to offer. A fuller account was found in the first volume of Thompson's "History of Long Island." Some repetition is risked in giving both reviews but together they made an acceptable account of his life.

"Thomas Sayre was baptized, July 20, 1597, Leighton Buzzard, County Bedford, England; son of Francis and Elizabeth (Atkin) Sayre.

"He was nearly 40 years of age when he left England and doubtless was married and had children born before coming to America. The first record found of him, is at Lynn, Mass., 1638, but it is not known with certainty when he sailed from England or settled at Lynn where he was granted 60 acres of land (see map #2).

"He was one of eight who purchased a sloop for the transport of their families to Long Island in 1640 with intent to make a new settlement. Before sailing, however, the proprietors sold their interest in the vessel to David Howe who was to make three trips annually for two years in order to bring their goods to the new settlement.

"They began to settle at Manhasset at the head of Cow Bay or Schoute Bay, but this land was already claimed by the Dutch and they were ordered to leave it. Then they sailed back to Peconic Bay, further east on Long Island, at what is now North Sea, near the village of Southampton, now "Old Town." They remained there eight years and in 1648 Thomas built his house, undoubtedly, the oldest in Long Island (The earlier buildings had been either dug-outs or log shacks.) His house remained in the Sayre family until 1892.

"He was one of the three townsmen, 1654, ordered by the General Court to train the town soldiers, Oct. 23, 1650; to lay out roads and view (survey) for fences, 1657; was juror, 1653-8. He was a farmer and tanner. In 1667, he gave five acres to each his four sons. He made his Will in 1669. Children:

1. Francis Sayre, md. Sarah Wheeler
2. Daniel Sayre, md. (1) Hannah Foster (2) Sarah \_\_\_\_\_
3. Joseph Sayre, md. Martha \_\_\_\_\_
4. Job Sayre, md. (1) Sarah \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Hannah Raynor Howell
5. Damaris Sayre, md. David Atwater, see (7-74)
6. Mary Sayre, md. Benjamin Price
7. Hannah Sayre
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (dau) Sayre, md. Edmund Howell <sup>1</sup>

Neither the DAR record nor the Thompson writings gave the name of Thomas Sayre's wife. His Will did not mention her so it seems that she had preceded her husband in death. From Vol. 1 of "History of Long Island" the early history of the area of Southampton is described:

"The town of Southampton, called by the Indians Agwam, meaning 'a place abounding with fish,' is bounded south by the Atlantic Ocean, west by Riverhead and the channel of Peconic Bay, north by Gardiners Bay and the Sound and east by East Hampton. Length from east to west, about thirty miles, and breadth, in the widest part, six miles, being centrally distant from New York, one hundred miles. The name was adopted in remembrance of Southampton, Hampshire, England, from whence many of the first settlers had taken their departure for the new world . . .

"The settlement was begun in 1640, being nearly contemporary with that of Southold, on the opposite side of Peconic Bay . . . Governor Winthrop, in his journal of April 4, 1640, says, 'that the inhabitants of Lynne finding themselves straightened (in crowded condition) looked out for a new plantation, and going to Long Island, they agreed, with one Mr. Farrett, for a parcel of the isle near the west end, and with the Indians for their right. The Dutch hearing of this, and making claim to that part of the island, by a former purchase of the Indians, sent men to take possession of the place, putting up their banner in a tree. The Lynne people sent ten or twelve men, with provisions, who began to build after taking down the banner. An Indian had drawn, in its place, an unhandsome face. The Dutch took this in high displeasure, and sent soldiers who imprisoned the English men for a few days, and then taking an oath of them not to return, discharged them. The men left but took another place at the east end of the same island; and being now about forty families at Lynne ready to become a corporation, called upon Rev. Pierson, a godly learned man and preacher of the church at Boston, to go with them . . .

". . .The first town meeting was held April 6, 1641, from which time the proceedings were regularly entered, the records of which yet exist in a good state of preservation. . .

" 'A deed was subsequently obtained for the lands from Pomotork, Mondagh and other principal Indians.' Among the names listed in this deed was our Thomas Sayre, 'bearing date Dec. 13, 1640, for the consideration of sixteen coats already received, and also fourscore bushels of Indian corn, to be paid upon lawful demand by the last of September, 1641; and upon further consideration that the said English shall defend us the sayd Indians from the unjust violence of any Indians that shall illegally assaile us' . . .

"Previous to embarking from Lynn, Captain Howe purchased of several Lynn residence, including Thomas Sayre, their shares of a vessel, in which they were to come to Long Island. On which account he agreed to transport as many goods, as the undertakers should desire, at a certain sum per ton, in payment of the price of the vessel, which was sixty five pounds. And it was further stipulated, that the vessel should be wholly employed in the service of the plantation, and not be sold away without their consent; also that the said vessel should be ready at Lynn, to transport the persons and goods of the company, three times in the year, if required. The contract bears date the 10th of March 1640, and still remains in the clerk's office in Southampton." <sup>2</sup>

The names of the settlers who had arrived during the first twelve months numbered 47 and Thomas Sayre was the 7th name listed.

"Soon after the arrival of these first purchasers, they were joined by other families, according to the former agreement made at Lynn; for while there, they had entered into a civil compact, and executed articles of confederation for their future government. Of one of those instruments the following is a copy:

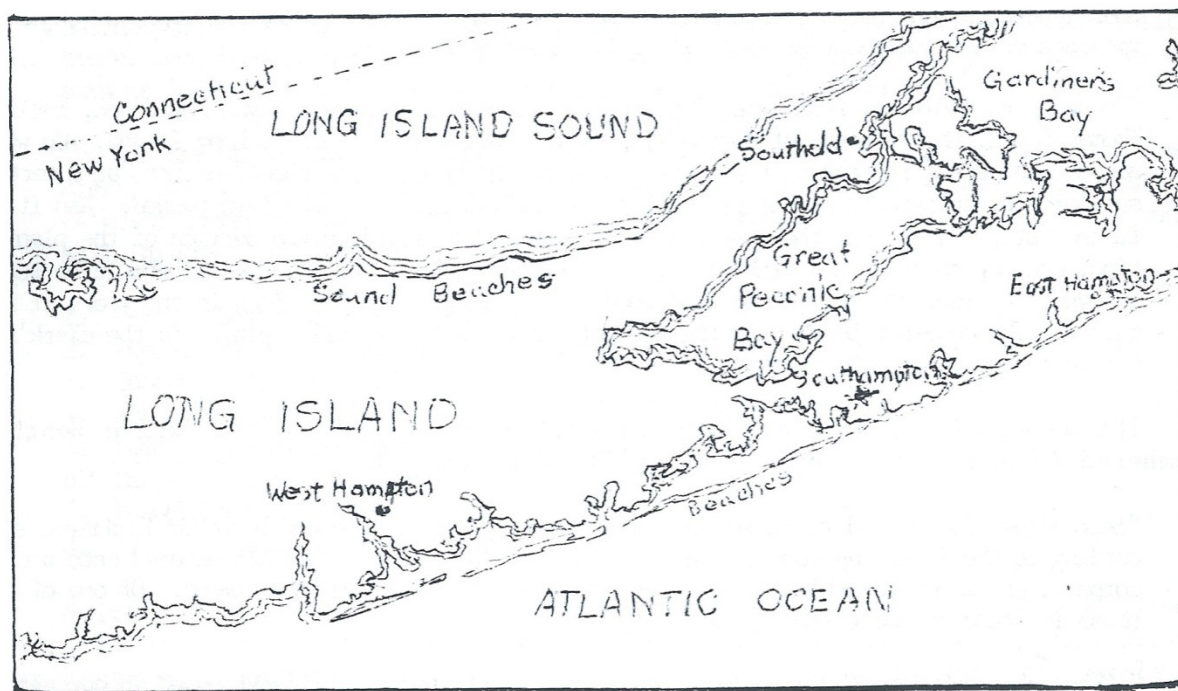
" 'Know all men whome these presents may concerne, yt whereas it is expressed in our agreement that the power of disposing of lands and admission of inhabitants into our plantacon, shall at all tymes remaine in the hands of us, the said undertakers, to us and our heyres forever; and our intent and meaning is, that when our plantacon is layd out by those appoynted accordinge to our artikle; and that there shall be a church gathered and constituted accordinge to the mynde of Christ, that then wee doe ffreely lay downe our power both of orderinge and disposing of the plantacon, and receivinge of inhabitants, or any other thinge, provide that they shall not doe anything contrary to the true meaninge of the artikle. Furthermore, whereas it is expressed in a former artikle, that the lands of the undertakers should at all

tyes remaine ffree, affordinge any help to build meeting-houses, or makinge a bridge, or mendinge of highways . . ." 3

The above article (artikle) peals with a strong pride in land ownership. Not all were able to be land owners in England. The majority were mere tenants. One can perceive what motivational forces were to be had in this land of opportunity. The desire for land was great and 'to own and to have' was a supreme accomplishment and to be able to say, "our land" as in the foregoing agreement made any settler feel like a king with a dominion.

Another impressive and revealing fact was the willingness of the people, as expressed in the article, to submit to the 'mynde of Christ'; that whatever should be the will of their minister in governmental affairs, they would comply with the submission of obedient and humble servitude, for the good of the plantation and for peace in the colony.

This type of character in the early settlements of New England was the all important factor of survival and success. 'In God we Trust' and 'the Lord helps those who help themselves' seemed to be the philosophy of the settlers; prayerful and hard working people.



On both sides of the Long Island are numerous streams with their bays of navigable waters where vessels of considerable size were well protected from storms and heavy winds. The salt marshes of the island's meadows furnished immense quantities of grass annually and its waters were equally prolific of almost every variety of shell and scale fish. Wild fowl of many kinds were in countless numbers and formerly the land was tillable in areas and there was a considerable growth of forest.

Southampton, in its early years, kept in quite close communication with its English neighbors who had settled New Haven, across the Sound. Boat travel was used extensively to provide a means of trade with the settlers along the coast of Connecticut.

It would make an interesting discourse if one could know the incidents that brought Damaris Sayre of Long Island and David Atwater of New Haven together in matrimony (7-68).

Thomas Sayre made his Will Sept. 16, 1669. He died 1670 and his Will was executed by his son, Job. The composition of the Will is interesting in its fairness and concern for his children. The disposition of all his movable belongings was specified in detail.

"I give unto my sonne Daniell . . . three acres more of land lying in the Ten-Acre lotts and one great Pewter Platter. (Pewter is an alloy of tin and lead or tin and copper). I give unto my sonne Joseph, forty pound Sterling, to be paid him by my executor, ten pounds per annum, to be paid in good merchants shoes or other pay that will procure hides toward his setting up as a tanner." <sup>4</sup>

Along with additional acres of land, Francis received a pewter flagon (a large drinking vessel having a handle and sometimes a lid) a pewter bowl, and a great pewter platter. These particular articles were prized more than money or land. His son Job and four daughters were equally provided for in his Will which has not been copied here in its entirety.

However, of interest is the manner in which the dedication of the bearer is made known. Here Thomas bequeaths his soul in touching words: "In ye name of God, Amen, I, Thomas Sayre of So. Hampton on Long Island, in ye County of Yorke, being in perfect strength of mind, blessed be the Lord for it, but weake of bodye, not knowing ye day of my appointed change, doe make this last Will and Testament. I give and bequeath my Soule unto God that gave it, and my bodye unto earth, from whence it was first taken." <sup>5</sup>

1. #71 p. 89
2. #132 pp. 324-328
3. ibid, pp. 326-327
4. #71, p. 86
5. ibid