

WILLIAM PECK (1601-1694)
 ELIZABETH (1683)

Several pedigree lines of Peck histories were consulted for information on William and his son John some of which were, "History and Genealogy of the Page Family," "An Account of Some of the Ancestors of Thompson and Hull" and "Selleck Memorials" as well as a brief review given by the DAR in their records.

The authors Charles N. Page, William Edwin Selleck, Blanche (Williamson) Porter are quoted in the following notations regarding the Peck English heritage and William's life and ancestry:

"But little is known of the early history of this family except that it is of English descent. No coat of arms has been found by me, but the three branches of the family which lived in London, Norfolk and Essex each had a family crest." ¹

"The Peck family is of great antiquity in England and early settled in Becton, Yorkshire, also Hesden and Wakefield, later scattering to all parts of England. It is supposed that Deacon William Peck's ancestors were from Wakefield of Hesden of the family of Richard Peck, Esq. of Hesden and Wakefield 1410." ²

"Edward Peck, father of the immigrant ancestor William Peck, was an eminent lawyer, Sergeant at Law to his Majesty Charles II. He married Grace Green, granddaughter of the Keeper of Lions in the Tower of London." ³

Blanche (Williamson) Porter used a line of descent from Edward Peck who married Grace Green when applying for membership in the 'National Society of Daughters of American Colonists' by right of lineal descent. Her line came through William Peck, son of Edward, who was one of the founders of the New Haven, Conn., Colony in 1638. In her written review of William Peck (1601-1694) she states:

"William Peck is the ancestor who assisted in establishing the foundation of Colonial America while acting in the capacity of Proprietor of New Haven, Conn. Colony. He served as deacon of the early church at New Haven."

"Jeremiah Peck (the brother of John Peck who married Mary Moss) was a schoolmaster at Guilford. He was a student at Hartford College, 1653-1656, He taught Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He became minister to Saybrook, Conn., on Sept. 25, 1661." ⁴

We are told in the writings of Chas. N. Page in 1911 that William was born in the city of London, England, in the year 1601, and was married in England to Elizabeth (her last name is unknown) in 1622. They became the parents of one son, named Jeremiah, before leaving England and "emigrated to this country in the ship 'Hector' with Rev. John Davenport, Governor Eaton and others, arriving at Boston on June 26, 1637."

It is supposed that their reason for emigrating to America was because of the persecution of Arch-Bishop Laud, during the reign of Charles First, and they came here to enjoy unmolested, religious and civil liberty. Soon after arriving in this country they removed to Connecticut and he was one of the original proprietors of the city of New Haven. His autographic signature being affixed to the fundamental constitution, dated June 4, 1639, which provided for

the government of the new colony. He was admitted a freeman of the colony on Oct. 20, 1640, and his name in the records usually bears the prefix "Mr.", which was then a token of respect and distinction. He was a deputy in the years 1640-- He was a merchant, and treasurer and general business agent of the Collegiate School established in New Haven. 5

This last statement speaks for his educational qualifications and we see him as a gentleman of much bearing and stature.

William and Elizabeth had three more children all born in New Haven. John, our ancestor, was born shortly after his parents arrived in New Haven, Conn. The children are listed in the DAR record as:

- "1. Rev. Jeremiah Peck, b. England, died June 7, 1699, Waterbury, Conn., md. Nov. 12, 1656, Joanna Kitchell, dau. of Robert Kitchell and Margaret Sheaffe.
2. John Peck, b. abt 1638; md. Mary Moss, dau. of John and Abigail Moss (7-7)
3. Joseph Peck, bp. Jan. 17, 1641 at New Haven; died Nov. 25, 1718 at Lynne, Conn., md. Sarah Parker, dau. of William and Margery
4. Elizabeth Peck, bp. May 6, 1643 at New Haven, md. 1661, Samuel Andrews."

It was the particularly delightful water cove and sulubrious landscape surrounding the mouth of the Quinnipiac River off Long Island Sound that enticed the earliest company of settlers who came from England and subsequently from what was becoming a crowded area in and around Boston. The first settlers were "a company of English Puritans led by John Davenport and Theophilus Eaton. Davenport had been the vicar of St. Stephen's Church, Coleman Street, London, and Eaton had been a parishiner in the same parish. Their friendship had probably been of earlier date than their residence in London, as they were both born in Coventry, Warwickshire, England, and there was no great difference in their ages. The company sailed from London in the 'Hector'"and another vessel" whose name has not been preserved, and arrived in Boston, June 26, 1737 . . ." 7

In August, Theophilus Eaton led an exploring party and by waterway they traveled around Cape Cod, into the Long Island Sound to view the coastline of what is now the State of Connecticut. They selected a sight at the harbor near the mouth of the Quinnipiac River.

"In the ensuing April, the whole company (including, of course, William Peck and his wife, Elizabeth, and small son, Jeremiah) arrived from Boston. The company now included not only those, like the Pecks, who had come from London with Davenport and Eaton; but a company from Hereford and other western counties of England, which, sailing from Bristol, in the 'James', under the leadership of Peter Prudden, a nonconforming minister of the Church of England. The company also consisted of some few residents of eastern Massachusetts who were disposed to join the new enterprise.

"On the Sunday following their arrival at Quinnipiac, the company assembled twice for public worship; Mr. Davenport preaching in the morning and Mr. Prudden in the afternoon. The service was held under a spreading oak near the northeast angle made by George and College Streets. Public worship was ever after maintained in the town, and about a year after the arrivals of the settlers, or planters as they styled themselves, the erection of a house of worship was commenced." 8



New Haven Meeting-House

New Haven, from the first, aspired to be a colony of separate entity. The terms colony and plantation are used simultaneously. Gradually the word plantation fell into disuse, and the word 'town' took its place; the word colony was replaced when New Haven became reconciled to its incorporation into the larger area to become Connecticut.

The early proprietors were given house-lots on a half-mile square bounded by what is now George and Grove, State and York Streets. (map #26) Some lots were given outside the square, called suburbs. These lots were situated irregularly except for some lots in a straight line, later to become Water Street. The half mile squares of which that one called the 'Green', they called the Market Place.

"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 . . .

"The internal arrangement of the meeting-house is shown in the accompanying plan (copied in map #25). Behind the pulpit was the seat of the teaching elders; immediately in front of it was the seat of the ruling elder; and before the seat of the ruling elder was the seat of the deacons, having a shelf in front of it which ordinarily hung suspended from hinges so as to present its broad surface to the congregation, but when needed for a communion-table was elevated to a horizontal position. The officers of the church thus sat facing the congregation. The sexes were seated apart, the men on one side and the women on the other side of 'the middle alley' . . ." 9

The seating of our noted ancestors is shown on the map mentioned, #25. William Peck's particular assigned seat can be sighted in Row 8, fourth from

the aisle. His wife occupied the first seat in Row 3.

The "forms" between the "alleys" were long enough to accommodate seven persons; but only two or three persons were assigned to the forms near the pulpit, the space allowed to each having some proportion to his dignity. A schedule was written that exhibited the names of the proprietors of the town in accordance to the number of persons each had in a family; the amount of his estate; the number of acres he was entitled to have of 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. These considerations seem discriminatory to us of our day but to them this variance of respect and the acknowledgement of the same was of social and religious importance to each proprietor and especially was the dignity of the minister or any civic officer credited with due pomp in such respect.

In noting the description of William Peck's home-lot inside the town borders we must not assume that his estate did not include some of the meadow lands, uplands near the town or an acreage of neck land, because all of the first settlers acquired much land in the areas outside the town limits. These lands were appropriated for the planting of crops and grazing of livestock.

"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, perhaps ten feet in diameter where it passed through the floor; being even larger in the cellar, and tapering as it ascended, the fireplace being six or eight feet long . . . The portion most used by the family, in which they cooked and ate their food, and in winter gathered about the spacious fire-place, was in the rear of the chimney. At one end of it was a small bedroom and at the other a buttery.

"The frame of such a house was covered with clapboards plastered on the sides; but the joists were exposed to view . . . The doors were of upright boards fastened together with battens, and had wooden latches. Any outside door was made of two layers of board, one upright and one transverse fastened together with wooden pegs, so arranged as to cover the door with diamond-shaped figures of equal dimensions . . .

"Lower in rank than these framed buildings were plain log-houses, which, when small and built with joiner-work, were called huts rather than houses: as on a Western prairie a log cabin is even now distinguished from a log house." 10

Thick forests abounded and so timbers were plentiful for building and for the huge logs burned in the fire-places. Furniture was crudely built and only such pieces as were necessary were made. Even so, their homes compared favorably with those of the time in England. There was an abundance of game and tillage produced, besides the maize, the beans, and the squashes indigenous to the country, almost every variety of food to which they had been accustomed in England.

"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. Diets were frequently porridge made of meat, peas or beans. A boiled pudding of ground maize was often cooked in the same pot with the meat and vegetables making a dumpling like addition. Fish was plentiful so there were fish

days every week and on Saturday, the oven was heated for baking bread and a pot of beans was put in above the fire and allowed to remain for twenty-four hours, furnishing a warm meal for the family when they returned from a long day at public worship . . .

"No picture of domestic life in New England could be complete which did not exhibit the family gatherings at harvest time. Rejecting Christmas, the Puritans established the harvest festival, which became equally domestic in the manner of its observance. Children who had left their parents to prepare themselves for the duties of adult life, or to occupy homes which they themselves had established, were gathered again in the home of their nativity. Here they recounted the blessings of the year and united in giving thanks to God. Family worship was an important feature of domestic life in a Puritan household. At meal time they stood beside their stool or bench while the blessing was asked and thanks given. Scriptures were read regularly and prayers were offered at the close of the meal as well as before, all standing again in reverence and humility." 11

Thus do we see the family of William and Elizabeth Peck in their sturdy home of simple comfort, built beside their neighbors within one of the eight square divisions that surrounded the Market Place square. We can be sure they were within walking distance from the Church.

The harbor became a popular stopping place for ships bringing merchandise from Boston and often from England, furnishing goods for William's store in exchange for local products he could acquire. Mr. Selleck tells us that William took an active part in connection with the Constitution of the Colony of Connecticut when New Haven became a part of the greater Colony with headquarters in Hartford.

For years the two colonies of Hartford and New haven had pride in remaining separated, each striving to become the Utopia that had been the dream of their founders. The debate, pro. and con., had only intensified elements of competition but when the union of the two colonies came to fruition all bitter strivings were forgotten for the advantages became at once apparent. it is a likely fact that William Peck and Lieut. Gov. James Bishop (7-54) who wielded his administrative influence in the same cause, were familiar acquaintances, if not great friends.

The early community of New Haven was not so large as would make any strangers in their midst. William and Elizabeth Peck were familiar with several others who became ancestors as generations came and went. They no doubt had friendly concourse with the Cooks (4-6), Parkers (4-9), Ives (4-10), Merrimans (4-13), Atwaters (7-68), Austins (7-64), Bradleys (7-76), Brocketts (7-81), Moss (7-73), as well as the Bishops (7-54).

A common experience had by the early settlers was the Indian wars that became inconveniences that were always attended by great fears. Though the settlers made every possible preparation to be on guard and ready for attack, they were often caught by surprise and frequently some of their members were killed. Not until the Indians were subdued during King Philips War (1675-6) and their leaders executed, did they have comparative peace. The execution of Chief Metacom (called King Philip by the English) took place at New Haven; a solemn occasion for all of the settlers in and around the area.

There was a time during the later years of William and Elizabeth's sojourn in Connecticut when it seems apparent, according to some records, that William and Elizabeth may have moved to Lyme, a sea-port town, not many miles east of New Haven, at the mouth of the Connecticut River, where their youngest son Joseph and his family lived. Whether they were living in Lyme at the time of Elizabeth's death, Dec. 5, 1683, or were there on a visit after returning to New Haven to live, we cannot be sure, but Elizabeth died at Lyme.

William was eighty two years of age at this time but he subsequently married Sarah Holt, the widow of William Holt. An account written by Clarence Willis Eastman in 1916 states that, "His wife died Dec. 5, 1683, while on a visit to her son at Lyme, and he married Sarah, widow of Wm. Holt . . ." 12

Returning to Mr. Page's record we find details about his home locale in New Haven

". . . His home property consisted of about an acre of land on which his dwelling and store were located on the south side of Church Street, the lot extending from Center Street, about one hundred feet, and easterly from Church Street, to just beyond what is now Orange Street. Part of the property is now covered by the large Connecticut Savings Bank and Clark Buildings. He died on October 4, 1694, at the advanced age of 93 years, and his grave stone is in the cemetery in the north part of the town . . ." 13

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| 1. #86 p. 113 | |
| 2. #71 p. 83 | 8. ibid |
| 3. #88 p. 73 | 9. ibid, p. 11 |
| 4. ibid, p. 76 | 10. ibid, p. 15 |
| 5. #86 p. 113-114 | 11. ibid, pp. 16-17 |
| 6. #71 pp. 83, 84 | 12. #87, p. 23 |
| 7. #111 p. 1 | 13. #86, p. 114 |