

JOHN PECK (abt. 1638-1724)
 MARY MOSS (1647-1725)

John's parents came from England at the time of Gov. Eaton and Rev. John Davenport and went directly from Boston to New Haven, Conn, as one of that town's earliest settlers. John was born shortly after the arrival of his parents in New Haven. The ship "Hector" arrived in Boston June of 1637 and John's birth was recorded in New Haven in 1638/39. ¹

The beautiful Quinnipiac River empties its water into the New Haven Harbor, a natural setting for a town they named New Haven and it was 'new' when John's parents arrived for they were among the founders of this new colony on the shore of Long Island Sound. It was here that John grew to manhood and married Mary Moss, whose parents, John and Abigail (Charles) Moss, had also been among the same original group of settlers. Mary was born 11 April 1647 in New haven.

John and Mary were married Nov. 3, 1664, when he was about 26 years of age and she was 17. They had a family of ten children; four were born in New Haven and the others were all born in Wallingford after John and Mary chose to accompany others who became the earliest group to found that new settlement. The children are listed herein:

1. Mary Peck, b. Apr. 3, 1666, New Haven; died Jan. 9, 1710 at Wallingford, Conn., md. Feb. 13, 1682 - John Doolittle
2. Elizabeth Peck, b. 1668; died Jan. 1668
3. John Peck, b. Mar. 16, 1670; died Mar. 22, 1670
4. John Peck, b. Aug. 1671, New Haven; died June 28, 1768, Wallingford; md. (1) May 23, 1694, Susan, dau. of Samuel Street and Anna Miles, (2) July 2, 1706, Mary, dau. of Joseph Bradley and Silence Brockett (3) May 24, 1738, Martha, dau. of John Moss and Martha Lathrop
5. Elizabeth Peck, b. Dec. 29, 1673, Wallingford, died 1709; md. Nov. 20, 1690, John Merriman
6. Lydia Peck, b. May 1, 1677
7. Ruth Peck, b. July 20, 1679; died Jan. 8, 1738 at Wallingford; md. 3 Feb. 1703/4 Samuel Lathrop
8. Abigail Peck, b. Mar. 16, 1682; md. 1698, David Austin (7-64)
9. Anna Peck, b. Nov. 3, 1684, died, infant
10. Anna Peck, b. Mar. 1686; died 26 Feb. 1716, Wallingford; md. (1) Feb. 11, 1703, Nathaniel Yale (2) April 1, 1715, Joseph Cole" ²

It is interesting to note the several marriages that include the names of early New Haven and Wallingford settlers, who fall into place as ancestors and link lines of relationships in this study. Peck, Moss, Bradley, Brockett, Merriman and Austin, all are familiar names of ancestors.

It was in the year 1669 that the question of making a new settlement further up the Quinnipiac River was first agitated, but on account of the Indians the undertaking was delayed until the next year. By this we might assume that John and Mary were caught up in this agitation, and the anticipation of such a challenge must have held their interest. The arrival of new immigrants was beginning to be a problem for New Haven and expanding its bounds seemed to be the best solution. The selected sight of Wallingford was only a few hours journey by land and even less time would be spent if the moving was done by river

raft. It was close enough that the materials needed for starting a new village would facilitate their availability. Driving their cattle and sheep was possible without the risks that were taken in longer distances. The waterway provided by the river made rafting possible. John Peck with many others was involved in making preparations.

They took orderly measures to appoint committees and assign specific tasks. The propriety with which this was accomplished in the few years following 1670 was like a miracle. The new settlement was soon to see an influx of people faster than it seemed possible to control, but the people had foresight, were enthused about the future and willing to do whatever was needed to make a dream come true. ³

In footnotes of Wallingford's History we read, "It appears that Abraham Doolittle (father-in-law of Mary Peck, oldest child of John and Mary Peck) and John Peck were on the ground (Wallingford) in 1668, and John Moss and John Brockett in the autumn of 1669, which fact was undoubtedly the cause of their being selected as a committee to superintend and manage the affairs of the new village; but it was not until the month of April, 1670, that the first permanent settlement at Wallingford was made." ⁴

The new settlers signed a covenant as they had done in New Haven. A copy of their original covenant or agreement is given in Appendix #8. This mandate was signed by 38 settlers including John Peck, Nathaniel Merriman, John Mosse, John Brockett, John Ives and Samuel Cook.

The location of Wallingford was described in the "History of Wallingford" Chap. 3, page 78, as:

". Upon the hill, on the east side of the great plain commonly called 'New Haven Plain . . . beginning at the southeast of said hill . . . it is ordered that 'there shall be a highway crosse the hill, from east to west of six rods broad; (being the road now leading from the railroad mainstreet) and from thence a long highway of six rods broad on the top of the hill to run northward (being the north portion of the present main street) and on each side of it to ranges of house lots of six acres to a lot; and these lots to be distributed . . . (map #9).

"Afterwards the main street was continued south to where the Congregational Church later stood and north to the old Peck place, and a cross street laid out to Wharton's brook; continuing the main street to the old Rice place . . ." ⁵ (Nehemiah Royce [Rice], see 1-2)

These several streets and the main highway were all laid out six rods wide, and on each side were the house lots of six acres. As time passed other streets were laid out and the town expanded (map #9).

"After the planters had received their respective allotments, built their houses, and had assumed the form of a regular and settled community, then the committee who had arranged all the preliminaries and incipient stages of the new plantation, surrendered all their power, and the title of the whole territory, into the hands of the planters, who thereby became a corporate body; in other words, a town . . .

"At the first apportionment of land, thirty eight lots of 6 acres each were given out to that many families and shortly after some acreages were increased to 8 and 12 acres." ⁶

John Peck's allotment was increased to 8 along with Joseph Ives, John Ives (4-11), John Brockett (Jr.) and Samuel Cooke (4-6). Those of particular interest to the descendants of our lines of study who received 12 acres were John Brockett Sr. (7-81), John Moss (7-73) and Nathaniel Merriman (4-13). It was not long, however, before the first settlers were able to bring more land into use and acquire additional allotments.

"In the various transfers of the land, from the town of New Haven, thence to the associated planters, and ultimately to individual proprietors, no money or consideration of any kind was paid. The land was worth literally, nothing, until actually settled and cleared . . ." ⁷

Any persons who wished to become permanent residents after the area became a town were required to make application to the town before either a land allotment could be given or any lot be bought from a previous settler. These applications were to be accompanied by 'sufficient testimony' of the persons character qualifications. It is amusing at the present day to read the old records, and to see to what extent they carried their strictness, but we have to admit that their legislation was statesmanlike, just and quite liberal.

" So careful were they in guarding the character of their new settlement, that even the land which was appropriated to individuals as their private property, was held under this condition, that no sale was to be made to any stranger, until the character of the proposed purchaser had been examined and approved by the town and leave granted by express vote for such transfer of land." ⁸

The motives of those early settlers were so highly regarded that no waiving from the ideals they espoused would allow for too much leniency. Their lives were at stake and their very existence depended on strict rules. "The grim present was lowering upon them with all its sharp and angular realities. Indians, wild beasts, famine, cold, the diseases that lurk along the borders of new settlements, 'the French and Dutch trappers and fur traders, the devil,' and all other calamities, actual and imaginary, that kept their faculties constantly stretched to the highest tension, gave them no time to look back." ⁹ Rules and regulations were an absolute necessity for life.

Yet, without doubt, many of the laws, which are familiarly known as "blue laws," were concocted by some who wished to show the Puritans in as bad a light as possible. In spite of laws that were actual forgeries, we are indebted to them for our laws and liberties today. During all their trials and hardships, they never forgot their religion, which seemed to be the principal object for which they lived. How appropriately can we apply the language of Kingsley:

"Standing upon the accumulated labours of years, we are apt to be ungrateful to those who, with weary labour, and often working through dark and weary nights, built up the platform which now supports us. We complain impatiently of the blindness of many a man's doctrine, who was only incomplete, because he was still engaged in searching for some truth which, when found, he handed on as a precious heirloom to us who know him not." ¹⁰

The valleys along the Quinnipiac and Connecticut Rivers are beautiful sights. To the first settlers they must have viewed each particular choice sight as a 'dream come true'. John and Mary were a part of this dream for they lived in Wallingford from its infant state to the time of their passing, more than fifty years. This couple enjoyed 60 years of married life, watching and helping

their children become exemplary citizens, settled in a valley of great promise.

Home life was one of intimate association, where the outside world was far away and where domestic skills, though simple compared to those required for living in today's world, were learned as required for conditions in colonial times. The settler of the wilderness was self sustaining; he made his own clothing and provided for his own food by the labor of his own hands.

Have you ever wondered - perhaps, when you are holding a skein of wool in your hands - how it is that from the comparatively short hairs that make up the fleece of a sheep, one thread yards and yards in length can be obtained? That is what spinning does. Our mothers of colonial times had distaffs and twirling spindles to make the thread after the wool was corded by a wire like brush to soften and spread the wads of cut wool. The spinner, who was most often the mother or the daughter of the house, attaches the thread to the spindle, which she twists and then lets hang. It continues to twirl for a little time, and so, while the fibre is being drawn from the distaff by the weight of the spindle, the short fibres that compose the thread are being twisted together. This is how all spinning was done before the spinning-wheel was invented. Spinning wheels came into use in the 1600s, some very crudely homemade, but none-the-less they speeded up the process of making the thread.

After the spinning comes the weaving - that is, the combining of single threads to make cloth. This is done by stretching a series of threads - called the warp - tightly over a frame, and crossing them, over and under, with other threads the weft or woof - in other words the weft or woof is passed over and under the warp. The frame on which this is done is a loom. There were many forms of primitive looms, the first kind were very simple but improvements were gradually made.

So slowly, however, did man invent improvements in the methods of spinning and weaving, that as late as the middle of the eighteenth century the spinning wheels and looms of our ancestors were little different from those of their forefathers. Fabrics turned out by a skilled and conscientious hand weaver will invariably long outlast the cheaper cloths of modern machine production. However good the machine made fabrics may be, they can never surpass the cloth woven so carefully upon the hand looms from thread spun on the spindles and distaffs or the spinning wheel that graced the modest log home of our immigrant ancestors.

Without a question the home of John and Mary situated north on the main street of Wallingford was a busy place (map #9 lot #11). Usually the man of the town had many civic duties assigned him, and a wife and children to provide for. Six children of the ten born to John and Mary grew to adulthood and married. John died at Wallingford in 1724, age about 86; Mary died the next year Nov. 16, 1725 at Wallingford, age 82.

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| 1. #71 pp. 81,83 | 6. ibid pp. 79, 80 |
| 2. ibid pp. 81, 82 | 7. ibid p. 81 |
| 3. #7 pp. 70, 71 | 8. ibid p. 83 |
| 4. ibid p. 70 | 9. ibid p. 71 |
| 5. ibid pp. 78, 79 | 10. ibid p. 85 |