

INTRODUCTION

In the Town Records of Southampton, under date of October 26, 1643, occurs the following :

“Yt is ordered that Thomas Hyldreth shall satisfy vnto Mr. Smith to the value of three pounds and twelve shillings and foure pence, to bee payd vnto him in Englishe wheate after the rate of foure shillings by the bushell, betwixt this and the first of March, and that this order shall bee a finall ende of all matters of Controversie what so ever betwixt them.”

Such is the first mention made of a man who was destined to act an important part in the history of Long Island. Of his previous history we know absolutely nothing, and the most careful and painstaking investigation has failed to throw any light on the subject. He is said, by some historians, to have come from a certain village in Yorkshire, but the evidence is not sufficient to warrant us in stating it as a fact. How long he had been in Southampton before the above date is not known, but it was long enough for him to get into a controversy with one of the inhabitants. On March 7, 1644, the men of Southampton were divided into four “Wards,” for the purpose of cutting up whales cast upon the shore, and Richard Smith was in the “fourth Ward”; and in 1653, when they were divided into four “Squadrons” for the same purpose, he was the leader of the first “Squadron.” From the very first he seems to have been a leader in the settlement. His home lot* was one of the most eligible

*The home lot of Richard Smith was at the south end of the village of Southampton, on the west side of the main street, and next north of the highway leading to the Town pond and beach. It is now owned by the heirs of Wm. Y. Mortimer.

in the town. The fact that he owned a full Proprietor right shows his pecuniary means, and the title of "Mr." (then much more than an unmeaning compliment) is sufficient indication of his social position. In March, 1647, he was one of the "Five men" appointed to lay out land, and on October 7, 1648, he was chosen "Freeman" of the town, and thus became a member of the "General Court," and eligible to any office. On December 17, 1651, he was prosecuted by Mark Meggs "in an action of slander and defamation," but the jury decided in his favor. In November, 1648, he was one of a general committee to regulate the laying out of lands on the "Great Playnes," and in 1649 he held the same position.

On January 11, 1650, Deborah Raynor entered a suit for breach of promise of marriage (the first, probably, that ever occurred on Long Island) against "John Kelly carpenter," who assured her that his former wife was dead; but when brought before the Court, and it was proved that she was still living, he "attempted to excuse himself by saying that he meant shee was deade in trespasses and sinnes," (an excuse that did not save him from well merited punishment.) "Mr. Richard Smyth" was one of the arbitrators, who levied upon him a very substantial fine, to be paid to Deborah for her injured feelings. On October 7, 1650, by vote of the General Court he was chosen Constable, an office at that time of great dignity and honor. Shortly after he had a suit against Thomas Doxy, and won the case, which must have been of some importance, as he gained "£15, 6 shillings and 2 pence" damages. On May 3, 1654, he was granted an addition of land to his home lot.

His whole career in Southampton shows him to have been a man of active enterprise, and foremost among his equals, and he was of the same rank as Edward Howell, Lion Gardiner and Richard Woodhull, the three famed leaders of Long Island settlements.

Finally, on September 17, 1656, occurs the following entry :

"It is ordered by ye Generall Court, that Richard Smith for his vnreverend carriage towards the Magistrates, contrary to the order, was adjudged to bee bannished out of the Towne, and hee is to have a weeke's liberty to prepare him selfe to departe, and if at any time hee bee found after this limite weeke within the Towne, or the bounds thereof hee shall forfeit twenty shillings."

It seems, however, that the magistrates thought better of it and did not insist on his leaving within the specified time, for some weeks later he was still in the town and engaged in a controversy with Henry Pierson.

What was the real nature of his offence we do not know. It is very evident, however, that there was nothing of a criminal nature connected with it. His offence was simply what would now be called a very aggravated case of contempt of Court. His whole career shows him to have been a man of most determined will, and of the greatest pertinacity of purpose; and it is quite possible that he may have disobeyed some order which he considered unreasonable, and may have used language towards the Court that was more emphatic than complimentary.

Upon leaving Southampton he seems to have sold his home lot and meadows to Major John Howell, and they remained in the possession of his descendants for many years after. His next place of residence was Setauket, where he had for a neighbor Richard Woodhull, who had previously lived in Southampton. His dwelling was on the west side of the main street of the village, and no doubt the exact spot could be identified with a little antiquarian effort. The great aspiration of his life seems to have been a desire to be an extensive landholder and to possess a domain of which he was to be sole ruler, and free from the domination of other jurisdictions.

The following volume tells the whole story of his strug-

gles and triumph. His first purchase was from the Indian sachem Nassekege, for the land on the east side of Nissequogue river. Next, a purchase, or agreement to purchase, from Lion Gardiner another tract on the west side of the river, adjoining Huntington and claimed by that settlement. He seems to have made frequent visits to East Hampton* and was one of the witnesses to the deed from the Grand Sachem Wyandanch to Lion Gardiner. His negotiations with Lion Gardiner were brought to a sudden termination by the death of Mr. Gardiner in 1663, an event which terminated what had probably been a friendship and acquaintance of long standing. His descendants of the present generation have done honor to themselves by erecting to the memory of their illustrious ancestor a monument worthy of his fame and station.

The protracted controversy with the inhabitants of Huntington was at length ended in his favor and his Patent from Governor Richard Nicoll was at a later date confirmed by a second Patent from Gov. Andross, and from that time to the present the Patentee and his descendants have held their lands in peace.

Richard Smith died in 1692, evidently at an advanced age. His youngest son, Obadiah, died before his father, and the Patentee, with his accustomed promptness, erected to his memory a substantial tomb, which we trust no sacrilegious hand will ever disturb.

It is sad to consider that there is not wanting evidence

*One of his visits is thus recorded in East Hampton Records:

“June 12, 1666. Benjamin Price exchanged a horse with Mr. Richard Smith of Nesequage, being a sorrel colour, bald face and white feete, flaxen maine and taile, for a sorrel horse with a bald face, that was formerly Samuel Jones'es, Ben. Price giving 12 shillings and a halter to boote.”

We have no doubt but that the Patentee had the best of the bargain.

that all was not peace and harmony among the sons of the Founder of Smithtown. The fact that no monument marks his last resting place, shows that they were wanting in the feeling of filial reverence which would have made that the first of duties. His widow, who survived him many years, seems to have had just cause for complaint against her son Richard, and was compelled to apply to the Court for relief: and notwithstanding the plain terms of their father's will, the brothers seem to have found it necessary or advisable to get a quit-claim from Jonathan, the heir-at-law, and gave him an extensive tract of land for the same. The Patentee during his lifetime gave each of his sons a homestead and farm and they were all settled at Nissequogue in close proximity to their father's home. Jonathan, the eldest son, inherited the original homestead, now the property of the heirs of Edmund Thomas Smith. Next east was the house and lot of Richard the second, now owned by the Misses Harries, while still east of that was the home lot of Job Smith, and an ancient house still standing upon it seems old enough to date back to his time. Daniel Smith had his home at the west end of the street which originally ran to the river, not far from the river side, and here was in old times the fording place or "going over." His home lot is now the south part of the homestead of the heirs of Caleb T. Smith. On the west side of the "Horse Race" road and some ways north was the home of Samuel Smith, which was sold by his son, known as "Quaker Richard," to Daniel Smith second, and it is now the north part of the home farm of the heirs of Caleb T. Smith.

Concerning the dates of the death of the sons of Richard Smith there is much uncertainty. Daniel probably died before 1715; Richard died in 1719; Adam is said to have died in 1720; Job died before 1720. The date of Jonathan's death is unknown. Samuel Smith died April 2, 1717,

aged 63. No autograph of Daniel Smith is known to be in existence, and the only autographs of the rest of the sons are those attached to the deed to Rev. Daniel Taylor in 1715, fac similes of which are here given.

Richard Smith

Thomas Smith

Jonathan Smith

Juan Smith

Job Smyth

Autographs of Sons of the Patentee,



Snuff Box of Richard Smith.

(Now in possession of Hon. Frederick Diodati Thompson, Sagtikos Manor, Islip, L. I.)

The personal relics of the Patentee are very few in number. His descendant, J. Otis Smith, Esq., possesses what is believed to be the sword of his illustrious ancestor. His sister has a pair of sleeve buttons bearing a date which proves their authenticity. The most interesting relic is the silver snuff box* of the Founder, now in possession of Hon. Frederick Diodati Thompson, one of his descendants, to whom we are indebted for the illustration here given.

In 1735, all the sons of the Patentee being dead, an agreement was made among the grandchildren and heirs for a final division of the lands in Smithtown. Previous to this some of the heirs, if not all, had taken up tracts of land which they occupied, and in some cases had sold to other people, with the understanding that they were to be charged to their account in the general division. An instance of this is the tract on the south side of the Country road at Smithtown Branch, which was sold by Obadiah Smith to Capt. James Dickinson many years before the general division, and was in his possession when the division was made. Shubal Marchant seems to have bought his home lot (on the south side of the Nissequogue street) from the heirs who sold him their undivided shares.

In the division in 1736 three large tracts were laid out: First the "Long Lots," which extended from the Hunting-

*This snuff box was presented to Robert Smith Gardiner, son of Dr. Nathaniel Gardiner, who was an officer in the army of the Revolution, and grandson of Col. Abraham Gardiner, who married Mary, daughter of Nathaniel Smith, son of Richard 2d, and grandson of the Patentee. After the death of Robert Smith Gardiner it belonged to his sister Mrs. Eliza P. Brumley, who presented it to David Thompson, June 12, 1850. After her death in 1872 it became the property of his widow, Mrs. Sarah Diodati Gardiner Thompson, who gave it to her son, Hon. Frederick Diodati Thompson, of Sagtikos Manor, Islip, L. I. The drawing was made by David Gardiner, son of late Col. David Lion Gardiner and his wife Sarah Gardiner Thompson.

ton line east to lands previously laid out. Second, the lots on Ronkonkomy Plains, extending from the Islip line north to the Country road. Third, the "Fifty Acre Lots," lying on the north side of the Country road, east of the village of Smithtown Branch. The rest was laid out in lots whose boundaries were in most cases very irregular, owing to the fact that they had been taken up at various times and at the caprice of the various owners, to whom they were afterwards laid out as parts of their shares.

The question is often asked: Are there any undivided lands? To this the reply may be made that the beach between the Sunk Meadows and the Sound; the lot on the hill on the south side of Nissequogue street, where the burying ground now is; the bottom of Nissequogue river below the mill, and the bottom of Stony Brook harbor, are all undivided lands, and owned by the descendants of the Patentee.

It only remains for the writer to perform the willing task of returning thanks for the generous assistance rendered by many individuals. First of all, to Mrs. Charles Hilton Brown, whose assistance has been of the highest value, and without which the work could not have been made complete. To Richard B. Smith, Esq., the present head of the family, whose store of original manuscripts, collected and preserved by his honored grandfather, are of priceless value. To Coe D. Smith, Richard H. Smith, Robert B. Smith, of Commack, and Mrs. Nathaniel Smith, for free access to ancient documents inherited from honored ancestors and carefully preserved. To Richard H. Handley, Wm. J. Matheson, Morgan L. and John B. Blydenburgh, Clinton G. Smith, Frederick Lenhart, Ethelbert Smith, Mrs. Mowbray, James Clinch Smith, James W. Phyfe, Judge Wilmot M. Smith, and George A. Smith, we are under the greatest obligations for the illustrations which so greatly add to the value of the work. Especial

thanks are due to John L. Hill, Esq., for assistance which has enabled us to understand much that would have remained unexplained, and also for views of the property of the Wyandank Club, and most of all, for the charming view, the "Nymph of the Nissequogue."*

Our sincere thanks are given to Theron L. Smith, late Supervisor, and to Edward H. L. Smith, his successor, both worthy of their office, for liberality of sentiment and action, which will ever be a pleasant remembrance; and to Justices of the Peace George B. Ransom, J. Otis Smith, C. Melville Smith, Wm. S. Lawson and John H. P. Brower Browning. Also to Augustus G. Silliman and Edward E. Smith, Town Clerks, for able and willing assistance.

To Prescott Hall Butler, Esq., and Dr. E. P. Buffett we are indebted for portraits of two of Smithtown's most honored citizens.

The writer ventures to hope that this work will be appreciated as a valuable addition to Long Island history, and that it will preserve to future generations the acts and deeds of an illustrious ancestry.

SOUTHAMPTON, L. I.

WILLIAM S. PELLETREAU.

NOTE.—It might seem unpardonable not to mention the time honored tradition, that Richard Smith gained his land by making a bargain with the Indians, to have all he could ride around on his trained bull in a day. By starting at sunrise, and dashing through swamps and over hill and dale, by sunset he had gone round the town that now bears his name, and is still held by his descendants.

*For the title given to this view the writer is wholly responsible.