

**THE WOODSTOCK PIONEERS**

**Capt. Jacob Smith and Some of his Comrades in Arms.**

[No 46]

In a very few years there were many changes of ownership in the lands of the Woodstock grantees. The original grantees from time to time bought or sold or exchanged their lots as suited their purpose. Many of the privates of De Lancy's corps appear to have made no attempt to settle or improve their grants and at the expiration of ten years they became liable to escheat and were from time to time regranted by the Governor in Council to actual settlers. Twenty years after the issue of the grant only ten of the officers and men of the De Lancy battalions retained possession of any portion of it. At that time Capt. Jacob Smith had added to his property the upper part of lot No. 36 so that his land extended from what is now the lower corner up as far as St. Luke's church and back from the river about four and a half miles. He also received a grant of the island in the St. John opposite to him in the following curious way. (The story is given as told the writer by Capt. Smith's descendants.)

The first visit made by the New Brunswick governor to Woodstock was in a canoe in the early days of the present century. He was hospitably entertained by the old captain. In the course of conversation his Excellency inquired the name of the owner of the island. He was informed that there was really no owner since by the terms of the original grant the islands were to be the joint property of all the grantees and therefore no improvements had been undertaken and the claims of all had lapsed. The governor said nothing further but on his return to Fredericton a meeting of the council was held and a few days later Captain Smith was surprised to receive the grant of the island under the seal of the Governor in Council, a very handsome recognition of the hospitality extended on the occasion of his Excellency's visit.

Lieut. B. P. Griffith seems to have met with equal fortune. He secured from Major Joseph Greene the lot adjoining his own property and also a grant of the island opposite to him, which in old plans is termed Griffith's Island.

Sergeant Daniel McSheffrey bought out the rights of three of his old comrades, thereby securing possession of the whole of lot No. 19, where Mr. Leonard Slipp now resides.

Patrick Birmingham having sold his property to McSheffrey purchased from Sergt. Solomon Woods and three others lot No. 16, where Mr. Henry Bull now lives.

Sergeant William Jackson abandoned his lot at Lower Woodstock and acquired possession of lot No. 43 at Upper Woodstock, originally granted to Capt. Thomas French and others.

Corporal Richard Rogers moving in the opposite direction exchanged his grant at Upper Woodstock for lot No. 22, now owned by Mr. Franklin Bull.

John McLaughlin having sold his share of lot No. 22 to Rogers, secured possession of lot No. 17, where Mr. Albert Bull now resides.

Joseph Dixon sold his 100 acres in lot No. 3 to Judge Saunders and procured a grant of lot No. 32, originally owned by Lieutenant Cunningham, now known as "the Grove," or Beardsley property.

Peter Clark purchased from his comrades on either side and thereby become sole owner of lot No. 30, now the property of Messrs Peabody.

Surgeon Nathan Smith, although a non resident, appears to have paid sufficient attention to his grant to save it from forfeiture.

Sergeant Thomas Fowler moved from Woodstock to Northampton about 1793 having sold his grant of 400 acres to Rev. F. Dibblee James Craig, whose land included a part of the old Indian camping ground at Meductic point, seems to have concluded to leave that historic site to its original inhabitants, the Malisets, but whether this was a matter of choice or of prudence is uncertain. He removed to Northampton where his name occurs in the list of parish officers and also a licensed Tavern keeper.

In early times the keeping of a tavern was considered a very respectable occupation and the proprietor was usually a man of mark and influence in the community. Taverns however were a fruitful subject of legislation and abuses soon grew up in connection with them, as is indicated by the fact that on 15th January, 1823, the magistrates of the County of York, assembled in general court of sessions, expressed their conviction that there was at that time a far greater number of taverns licensed than was necessary for public convenience, and many persons had obtained licenses for the sole purpose of selling liquors without furnishing requisite accommodation to travellers. This was found to be "a great public injury and destructive of the morals of the people" and it was accordingly decided that no license should be granted in the county unless the keeper of the tavern should provide 2 good beds, 6 suitable stands for horses, one private room, and such other necessary accommodation for travellers as the court should judge expedient licenses not to be granted for a less sum than £2 and the application to be certified by the parish magistrate. Possibly a list of those who were at one time or other tavern keepers in the early days of the province would greatly surprise some of their descendants who have learned to regard the occupation of a tavern keeper with disfavor. And now for a few words about the old pioneers of De Lancy's brigade who laid the foundation of the Woodstock settlement. We begin with.

CAPT. JACOB SMITH.

He was born at Long Island, New York, April 26, 1749 at a place known as Stoney Brook. He was a zealous loyalist, and when it was proposed to organize a corps for the defence of Long Island, at once interested himself in the movement and succeeded in raising a company of which he was commissioned the Captain.

Judge Jones in his History of New York states that the yeomanry of Long Island were assured their services were to be employed solely in the defence of their homes and property from marauders across the Long Island Sound, and to frustrate any sudden attack by their rebel countrymen. The men

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were enrolled "for the defence of Long Island and other exigencies." The words in italics appeared an apparently harmless addition to the warrant of enrollment, but it was under the authority conveyed by them that the first and second De Lancy battalions were about the close of the year 1778 ordered to Georgia by Sir Henry Clinton.

Capt. Smith married Martha Birdsill of Long Island about 1777, she being then in her nineteenth year. Their first child Richard Smith was born shortly before the De Lancy battalions were ordered to the south. They were destined before their return to take part in some of the hardest fighting of the war, in the course of which they greatly distinguished themselves, under the gallant leadership of Lt. Col. Cruger. The anxiety of the young wife and mother during the four years of her husband's absence may readily be imagined.

It was not till about the end of 1782 that the corps returned, reduced to half its original size, and went into camp at Little Plains on Long Island where it remained till the autumn of 1783 when it was disbanded in New Brunswick.

Capt. Smith was obliged to sacrifice nearly all his property. He brought with him however one or two negro servants, (Rev. Frederick Dibblee makes the following entry in one of the pages of his parish register: "Jan. 26, 1809; buried Andrew a servant of Capt. Smith.") On his arrival at St. John he and others of the corps drew city lots. Afterwards by purchasing other lots he secured quite a valuable property there which he eventually sold for £300. Next spring he moved up the river as far as Springhill where he left his family and proceeded with his men to explore their lands at Woodstock. His daughter Elizabeth (who afterwards married William Upham and lived by the old willow trees at the Lower Corner) was probably the first white child born north of Fredericton.

Capt. Smith's first house was a log house, with huge stone chimney, the remains of which were standing within the memory of old residents of Woodstock. His next house was the second framed dwelling in the settlement, it was raised (as we learn from Rev. F. Dibblee's diary) Dec. 23, 1811. Capt. Smith was a man of spirit and resolution, fond of good horses, which he rode at a great pace over very rough roads. It is said that he broke in a colt to harness when in his 88th year. He traded considerably with the Indians, and had some pretty hard bouts with them when they were under the influence of liquor, one occasion, it is said knocking several of them down with a hand spike. On another occasion his wife with an infant in her arms was forced to seek refuge amongst the bushes that grew on a small island which formerly covered the ledges in the Meducnakic just above the mill dam.

There is a tradition that in the early days of Woodstock, a Baptist preacher came to the place and arranged to preach at the house of a settler named Jackson. To this some of the old settlers objected, whereupon Capt. Smith insisted the man should have a hearing; an altercation ensued in the course of which the fiery old Captain struck an officer of the law. He afterwards defied the magistrates to arrest him, but was eventually taken by a posse and carried to Fredericton. The litigation that ensued proved expensive to the Captain, and he was obliged to mortgage his island to Rankin and Co for £200. He afterwards presented the Island thus encumbered to his daughter Mrs. George Bull and her husband paid off the mortgage. (The writer has not been at pains to verify this story and gives it for what it is worth.)

Rev. John Beardsley, who visited Woodstock in July 1789 was undoubtedly the first clergyman to officiate in the settlement. Amongst others he baptized, Martha wife of Jacob Smith and four of their children, namely Richard, Elizabeth, Martha and Jacob.

The members of Capt. Smith's family were (1) Richard born in 1778, married Judith Jenkins, of Kingsclear, and died at Woodstock Sept. 8, 1833, aged 55 years.

(2) Elizabeth, born 1784, married Nov. 17, 1807 William Upham and died at Woodstock April 5, 1866, aged 83 years.

(3) Martha, born in 1786, married July 14 1807 James Upham and died at Woodstock, June 25, 1876, aged 90 years.

(4) Jacob born in 1788, married Eliza Leaming Griffith; died at Woodstock April 25, 1873, aged 85 years.

(5) Isaac Birdsall born Dec. 28, 1790 married Lydia Houlton.

(6) Benjamin born March 30, 1793, married Christiana McIndoe.

(7) Sophia, born Sept. 10, 1795 died at Woodstock, unmarried.

(8) Oliver DeLancey born March 25, 1798, married Fanny Gallop.

(9) Amelia Maria born Jan 28, 1800 married George Bull.

(10) Fanny born in 1802, married John S. Cox.

The great age attained by the members of the Smith family is not to be wondered at seeing that both parents were remarkable for longevity. Capt Smith died at the age of 88 years and his wife who died April 4, 1850 had attained the great age of 91 years.

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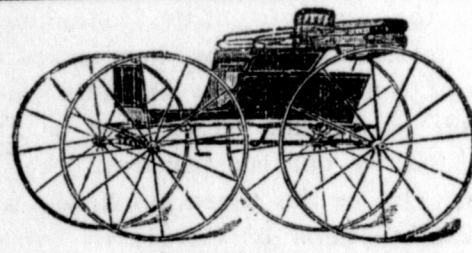


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