

Native Americans of Dartmouth and Westport

A Presentation by R. Andrew Pierce
Westport Historical Society
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Select Bibliography

Akin, Benjamin of Dartmouth, Mass. Account Book. Ms 204, Dubois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass.

***Boston Evening Post*, 26 May 1738, story about Dartmouth squaw killing her infant daughter, she was committed to Bristol Goal.**

***Boston Gazette*, 15 September 1777: “Deserted, Thomas Cuff & Ephraim (Frost?), Indian men belonging to Dartmouth. Amasa Soper, captain.”**

Bristol County Court of Common Pleas Records:

July 1714, Ephraim Pray of Dartmouth vs Boaz Mark an Indian man(called Mark Boaz on account); “The Defendant is not said to be of any town or county”.

1730, Jacob Squam of Dartmouth vs Silas Charles, late of Dartmouth, now of Plymouth.

June, 1755: Thomas Cooper, “Indian man” of Dartmouth, vs Edward Springer for a 1753 debt. Continued until 1765 in the Superior Court.

August 1768, case 137. Caleb Russell of Dartmouth vs Thomas Simon of same, laborer, debt.

June 1771, John Quonwan of Dartmouth, Indian whale fisherman, vs Thomas Pell of same, debt of L5, case 53.

March 1773, Case 13. Robert Bently of Dartmouth vs Naomi Abel of same, widow, debt

June 1774, Case 67. Naomi Abel of Dartmouth, Indian woman, vs Isaac Spooner of Dartmouth, gentleman, a deputy Sheriff, for L100 for assault & imprisonment on 18 Feb last past, appealed to next Superior Court.

December 1785, John Slocum of Chilmark vs David Cuff of Dartmouth, debt for value of 6 tons of hay and other items from Penikese Island in 1780. John & Paul Cuff, Joseph Barker, Perow Howland, all of Dartmouth, “negro men”, and Daniel & Grelley Page of Freetown, “mulatto man & woman”, all called as witnesses but their testimonies do not appear.

January 1787, case no. 28: Isaac Tockomoner of Dartmouth vs James Look of Tisbury, debt of L9 for Isaac’s share in a whale voyage in the Schooner Dolphin.

January 1787, case no. 56: Stephen Marcy of Dartmouth vs Quash Anthony & Abraham Anthony, free negroes of same, debt.

December 1795, case no. 11; Michael Wainer vs the Inhabitants of Westport, tax arrears.

Bristol County Court of General Sessions, 1724-38(Book 3):

p 231. 1734, Tom Paul & Solomon Pegin of Dartmouth, assaulting George Tooouosa(?)of same, not guilty.

Bristol County, Superior Court of Judicature,

1813, File #101407: Town of Dartmouth vs Town of Westport, for support of pauper Amy Jeffrey.

October 1816 (Bk 3, p.83), Inhabitants of Westport” appealed from a judgment in March 1816 at the Bristol County Court of Common Pleas, against “The Inhabitants of Chilmark,” for expenses incurred by them for supporting and maintaining [from 1813] one Harriet Michael, “a poor person found in ... Westport standing in need of relief ... having her legal settlement in ... Chilmark.”

Bristol County court document on eBay(12/24/2000):

1724; Joseph Annuckscow, Benjamin Abel, & Newcum Skipper, all Indians of Dartmouth, arrested “for taking “a certain dog of Benjamin Sole of Dartmouth worth five pounds money and put him to death by hanging him up from the tongue of a cart at or near the house of Peleg Slocum in Dartmouth.”

Commonwealth of Massachusetts. *Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, During The Sessions of the General Court, A.D. 1861.* Boston: William White, Printer to the State. 1861. House No. 216. Dartmouth Indian Land Claim. Second Special Report of John Milton Earle, Commissioner...to the Governor and Council.

Corey Papers, Old Dartmouth Historical Society Library, New Bedford, Mass. Mss 80. Box 31: Account book of Brigs "Hero" and "Polly", 1800-04. Crew list for "Hero" in Oversize Folder.

Cuffe Family Papers. New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Town Records. Old Dartmouth Historical Society Library, New Bedford, Mass.

DuBois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Ms 142, Anonymous Nantucket merchant ledger, 1763-68. Account of Joseph Salisbury of Dartmouth notes his Indians Isaac Monet and Amos Amos, 1764-65. Acct of Doctor Dan Hathaway of Dartmouth notes his "negro Peleg", 1764. p.89, callico dld Abigail Job, thread dld Joe Bonny. 5 cord dld Sol.Weeks, No.Wharf, 1768.

Earle, John Milton. Papers, 1652-1863. Manuscript collection at American Antiquarian Society, Worcester MA. 2 octavo volumes, 2 mss. boxes. Includes papers and correspondence of Earle as Commissioner to the Indians of Mass. and papers of previous Indian commissioners and officials.

Grover, Kathryn. *The Fugitive's Gibraltar: Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts*. University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2001.

Ibid., Database of New Bedford African Americans born in or before 1850. Westport, Dartmouth, Fairhaven included through 1855. Includes many Native Americans.

Hall, Katharine Stanley and Mary Hannah Sowle. *The Village of Westport Point, Massachusetts*. Westport, Mass.: Westport Historical Society, 1976.

Massachusetts Archives Series, Volume 30, p. 113."List of the Indians in Dartmouth, taken on the 16th day of Octobr 1724...males from sixteen year's & upward."

Massachusetts. Commission to Examine the Title of the Dartmouth Tribe of Indians to Certain Lands. Report of the Commissioners Appointed under the Resolve of March 28th, 1863: Being Chapter Forty of the Resolves of That Year, to Examine and, if Possible, Adjust Various Questions of the Title of the Dartmouth Tribe of Indians to Certain Lands in Dartmouth and Westport.

Massachusetts Historical Society Collections. Volume 4: 1671 Petition of Dartmouth Indians.

Massachusetts Historical Society. Miscellaneous Bound Manuscripts, 1763 August 25. List of Indians living in Dartmouth, Mass. "Mr. Thomas Simon and his wife and five sons and fore daughters; Rebecca Simon; Robard Simon; Sarah Simon; Hannah Efram; Nehemiah Abel and his wife and one daughter and her son; Neomy Abel; John Pequit; Isaac Pequit; Abagel Jeffre; Lydda Jeffre Sarah jeffre; Marcy Orcor; Samuel Orcor and his wife and one son and two daughters;Jeremiah Joel, his wife and her sister."

Massachusetts Senate. Report No. 96.1861 Report of the Indians of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Senate By John M.Earle, Boston.

Mayhew, Experience. *Indian Converts: Or, Some Account of the Lives and Dying Speeches of a Considerable Number of the Christianized Indians of Martha's Vineyard...* (London, 1727).

New Bedford Custom House Records: WPA Card Indexes to Whaling Crew Lists and to Seaman's Protection Papers. New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

New Bedford, Town of.

Overseers of the Poor Records, New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

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The New England Historic Genealogical Society, editor. *Massachusetts Vital Records to the Year 1850:*

Dartmouth, 1929-1930. 3 volumes.
New Bedford, 1932-41. 3 volumes.
Westport, 1918.

Pierce, Richard Andrew.

The Wampanoag Genealogical History of Martha's Vineyard, Volume I(with Dr. Jerome D. Segel). Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., Baltimore, 2003.

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Rawson, Grindal and Samuel Danforth. "The Reverend Mr. Grindal Rawson, Pastor of the Church in Mendon, and the Reverend Mr. Samuel Danforth, Pastor of the Church in Taunton, Spent from May 30 to June 24, 1698, in Visiting the Several Plantations of the Indians within this Province." Reprinted as "Account of an Indian Visitation, A.D.1698....," Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 1st Series, X (1809). "At Dartmouth we found two assemblies of Indians: at Nukkehkummees William Simons(ordained by Japhet of Martha's Vineyard 3 years since)is the pastor..."

Resolves of Massachusetts(Volumes and files in Massachusetts State Archives):

1785, Chapter 26. Resolve on the Petition of Anna Coshomon to sell land in Dartmouth.

1803. Pauper Accounts, Town of Dartmouth: for boarding & clothing John Pequit & John Quonnowell.

1808, Chapter 249: Resolve on the petition of William Simon of New Bedford, over 70, had wife, had lived in NB since birth, has land in common with brother Benamin; about 14 years past was unjustly deprived of the use of his land, he & his brother had petitioned the General Court in January 1804 & John Tinkham had been appointed by a Resolve to sell the same.

1862, Chapter 43. A Resolve appropriating \$50 to the Town of Westport for the support of Amelia Lewis.

1863,Chapter 40. A Resolve on the Petition of the Dartmouth Indians For Title of Land.

Rotch, William. Account Book, 1785-1814, Wistar Family Collection, Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Delaware.

Rotch Collection(Mss). Old Dartmouth Historical Society Library, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Smith, John. Letter to Ephraim Tripp, 10 November 1795, about Michael Wainer's suit against the town of Dartmouth. Old Dartmouth Historical Society Mss 53, S-81, Fol.1.

Thomas, Lamont D. *Rise to Be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe*(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

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Town Records | Town of Westport MA

<https://www.westport-ma.com/historical-documents/pages/town-records>

1787-1831 Westport Town Records contain incorporation, town meeting records, appointments, expenditures, support for the poor, roads, etc.

Wiggins, Rosalind Cobb, editors. *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1808-1817: A Black Quaker's "Voice from within the Veil"*. Howard University Press, Washington, DC, 1996).

Wood, William, storekeeper of Dartmouth, Mass. Account book, 1738-1747. The Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Delaware: Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera.

Testimony About Dartmouth/Westport Native Americans

In Legislative Records

Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, During The Sessions of the General Court, A.D. 1861. Boston: William White, Printer to the State. 1861. House No. 216. Dartmouth Indian Land Claim. Second Special Report of John Milton Earle, Commissioner...to the Governor and Council.

"This case is founded on a claim made by certain descendants of the Dartmouth Indians to extensive tracts of land in the towns of Dartmouth and Westport, embracing the whole, or a considerable portion, of eight farms in those towns...

The complainants, Rodney Wainer, Asa F. Wainer and others, claim, as heirs of the Dartmouth Indians, two tracts of land, one of them bordering on both sides of Slocomb's river in Dartmouth, and extending up and down the same, about three miles, and the other tract, on the west side of West(Acoaxet)River in Westport, forme(r)ly owned, occupied, and possessed by said indians, the title whereof, as they affirm, has never been sold, transferred, or alienated, by them or their ancestors, and the possession of which they now claim by right of hereditary descent. On their complaint a citation was issued, returnable at a public hearing to be holden at the court house in New Bedford on Friday the fifth day of August, 1859, and due service thereof was made on Samuel Barker, Nathaniel Gifford, Otis Slocomb, and John Wing, of Dartmouth, the alleged occupants of the tract situated in that town, and on Ellery Manchester, Elisha Peckham, and Samuel Brightman, of Westport, and John Dyer, of Little Compton, in the State of Rhode Island, the alleged occupants of the tract in Westport.

Robinson, counsel for the claimants, after stating the nature of their claim, proceeded to put in the evidence on their behalf, commencing with:

I, Marlborough Wood, of Dartmouth...depose...that I am ninety-one years of age last February, and have always resided in the town of Dartmouth from infancy, having been born here. In childhood and youth I knew large numbers of Indians, who occupied lands in this town. On both sides of Slocomb's River great numbers resided, had their wigwams, and improved their lands as cornfields, hunting and fishing grounds. From nearly a mile south of Otis Slocomb's house up to north of Samuel Barker's all along the shore on the west side of the river, they lived, had their wigwams and burial-grounds, none of which were ever enclosed by them. On Samuel Barker's farm was the orchard of "Nehemiah Abel," the Indian minister, and his residence, which place I frequently visited. Nehemiah, I remember well. He was distinguished as an Indian minister, and his place was much visited. They (the Indians) came once a year to his place from the Vineyard and other places, to hold a sacrament.

Asa F. Wainer's grandfather, Michael Wainer, lived and owned the place where Mr. Charles Tucker's house stands. His dwelling was on the same place.

John Wainer's grandfather lived, occupied and owned the land on the west side of West River, in Westport. I was quite an old man, and had been married some time, when he died. He occupied the land till his death.
(taken August 29, 1859).

I, Samuel Wilcox, of Westport, depose and say: I am eighty-eight years of age last October. I was born and have always lived in this town. I knew in my early years of Indian lands and Indians occupying them, in Dartmouth, from north of Samuel Barker's, all along the shore, including two burial-grounds. Particularly do I remember Nehemiah's place--his orchard and farm; from his orchard have I taken apples. He was celebrated as an Indian minister. The place now occupied by John Wing, the north part of which was an Indian settlement called "Quanachee." This was within my memory. (Taken August 29, 1859).

Mary Knobbs--I was born in Westport. I am of Indian descent. My grandmother was Naomi Abel, and my great-grandmother was Alice Quance. Alice was a pure Indian, and spoke the Indian language. They lived to the westward of John Wing's. My grandmother and great-grandmother lived a mile or a mile and a half to the north-west of Slocomb's River.

Cross-examined.--I am seventy-four years old. My mother died about thirty-nine years since. My grandmother died when I was a girl, before I was grown up. I recollect my great-grandmother. My grandmother took care of her. My father's name was Paul Cuffe.

Alice Cook--I remember when some of the Indians lived by Slocomb's River, on the west side, some sixty years ago. I am sixty-eight years of age. One of the Indians was Lizzie Prince, and one was Betty Nuxu.

Charlotte Smith--I am daughter of Benjamin and Catherine Cook. My mother was pure Indian; my father was half. My grandmother was Mary Cook, and my great-grandmother Elizabeth Nuxu. They were pure Indians. I presume they were part of the tribe that lived by Slocomb's River. There is an Indian burying-ground between Samuel Barker's and the river. There was an Indian settlement at Quanachee and one at Quansett. That was the tradition. I was told so by my mother.

Cross-examined.-- I have not personally known of the burial of any Indian at the burial-grounds. I have not known of any Indian residing within a mile of Slocomb's or Wing's. I knew Elizabeth Prince, living at Bald Hill.

Deborah C. Borden. --I am daughter of Catherine Cook. My great-grandmother was buried in the burying-ground on Otis Slocomb's farm, and lived and died near there. She had a wigwam there, and it was the last one there. I never visited her there. I was quite young.

Cross-examined.--My great-grandmother was buried there, as my mother told me. She died in 1812. I am fifty years old. My testimony in relation to my grandmother is founded on information given by my mother.

Direct.--I have visited the ground, and my mother told me where my grandmother laid.

John Wainer. I reside in Westport. I remember my grandmother. Her name was Margaret Quebbin. She was a full-blooded Indian. She lived, part of the time in Dartmouth, and part of the time in Westport. She lived about a mile and a half west of Slocomb's River in Dartmouth, near where Naomi Quance lived. My great-grandmother was Dorcas Quebbin. She was reputed to have lived down by Slocomb's.

Charles Manchester.--I am sixty-eight years of age. I recollect the mother and grandmother of Rodney Wainer, and where they lived. The grandmother lived on land recently occupied by Abraham Manchester, about a mile from the sea, and near a mile from West River. About a mile further north, near the river, an Indian lived, named Jacob Howdy. It might be thirty years since, more or less. Rodney's mother lived a little way across the line, in Rhode Island. It was generally reputed that these were Indian lands.

In Court Records

Depositions in Bristol County Superior Court of Judicature, File #101407, Dartmouth vs Westport, 1813.

I Eliza White of Westport...testify & say that about sixty one or two years since I was at a wedding & present when Joseph Jeffry was married to Amy Hinckley by John Simon an old Indian Minister, & further...saith that she had frequently been informed that the grand father of the above named Joseph Jeffrey had a Real Estate in that part of Dartmouth now called Westport, & was an inhabitant in said Westport, & was an Indian Minister & that I have been informed that the said Joseph Jeffry after his marriage with the said Amy Hinckily removed to that part of Dartmouth now New Bedford on lands belonging to Benjamin Russell on Clarks Neck----

(This deposition was made 6 December 1811 at the request of the Inhabitants of Dartmouth, to be used at the next Court of Common Pleas in December instant in the case of the Town of Westport vs the Town of Dartmouth; the reason was the deposition being taken was that the deponant could not attend court, being "old & infirm.")

I Quash Anthony...testify & say that in my younger days I lived with William Anthony in the Town of Dartmouth & one Joseph Jeffery an Indian Man was a Neighbour & lived with Humphry Smith, & when I was about seventeen or eighteen years of age the said Jeffery invited me to go to his Wedding at Little Compton, when we got to Perez Richmonds where Amy Hinckley lived the person to whom he was to be married, Joseph Jeffery & Amy Hinckley went to John Simons the Indian Minister to be married and myself & another went a different way to buy Cakes for the wedding, & we returned nearly at the same time to said Richmonds where we had the wedding fare.

Question by Abner Brownell Esq: Did Joseph Jeffery after this bring his wife to Dartmouth & live with her as Husband & Wife, & did he have any children by her--

Answer: Yes he did, & had several children--

Question by do: Do you know that John Simon the Indian Minister baptized People, :& administered the Sacraments to the Church,

Answer: No I do not, but have heard him preach.

Question by do: did Joseph Jeffery & his sisters when young & you knew them live in Dartmouth

Answer: Yes--

Question by Clark Ricketson, Selectman of Dartmouth: Do you know whether John Simon the Indian(rest not copied).

I William Simon of New Bedford...an Indian Man...testify & say that I perfectly recollect my Grandfather John Simon, an Indian Minister, who lived in the Town of Little Compton until near the close of his Life when he removed to the Town of Dartmouth now New Bedford, & until he did remove to this Town, his practice was to visit this Town & preach as often as once in three or four Weeks, & I have been often present when he administered the ordinances of Baptism & the Lords Supper, & I have frequently been present when he married People,

Question by Abner Brownell Esq: Do you now that your Grand Father John Simon received Blankets from Boston for the use of the Indians--

Answer, Yes,

Question by Zadok Maxfield, Selectman of Dartmouth: Do you recollect at what time Joseph Jeffry lived in that part of Dartmouth which is now New Bedford--

Answer: According to the best of my recollection it was about forty five years ago--

Question by ditto: How old was you when your Grand Father dec'd--

Answer: About fourteen years of age--

(The deponant made his "mark". The reason for this depositions was that he was "Aged & Infirm" and could not attend court).

I Rachel Quon of New Bedford...testify & say that many years ago I suppose nearly fifty years I knew one Joseph Jeffrey, (a coloured Man)who then lived with his Family in a small House or Building belonging to Caleb Russell of Dartmouth which is now New Bedford & about that time said Jeffrey went a Voyage to Sea from which he never returned, & as I have been informed he died abroad, ----

Question by Dartmouth Selectman: How long did Joseph Jeffrey live in Caleb Russell's House---

Answer: I cannot tell how long, but suppose two years or more--

(Taken 7 December 1811 at the request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Dartmouth, to be used at the next Court of Common Pleas)

I Eliza White...testify & say that about sixty one or two years since I was present when Joseph Jeffery was joined in Marriage with Amy Hinckley by John Simon the Indian Minister, after which they removed into the Town of Dartmouth, & lived together as Husband & Wife & had several Children, the said Jeffery having been brought up at Humphry Smiths in said Dartmouth, I always understood that the said John Simon was an ordained Minister, & have been frequently shown the place where he usually baptized those that applied to him for that purpose, & that he administred the sacrement of the Lords Supper to the members of the Church---

Question by Joseph Gifford Select man of Dartmouth: Did you ever go to the House of Joseph Jeffery after he was married to Amy Hinckley--

Answer: No--

Question by Abner Brownell Esqr: Did you ever know that said Jeffery lived with any other person as his Wife--

Answer: No I never did---

(Taken 15 August 1811 at the request of the Inhabitants of Westport to be used at the next Court of Common Pleas in the case between them & the inhabitants of Dartmouth. The cause of taking the deposition was the deponant's "great age", she "being wholly unable to attend on the Court."

In State Financial Records

On 24 May 1798 the town of Dartmouth submitted accounts to the state for "bording John Quannewin" from 1 March 1796 to 24 May 1798 and supplying him with "2 shirts, 1 pair woollen breaches, 1 pair shoes, 1 pair stockings, jackett." The account totaled \$202.58. The selectmen certified that "by the best information we can deduct that ... John Quannewins Father and Mother was borne in Tivertown in the State of Rhode Island and cum into the Town of Dartmouth since A.D. 1767 and has not gained any settlement in sd Dartmouth nor in this Commonwealth ... [and that] John Quanewill aged twenty seven years was born of a woman who marred [sic] a man from the State of Rod island deceast and is a cripple and has never gaind a legel settlment in this town nor any other in this Common Welth and has no relation of suficant ability to sopart him upon the best evidence we can obtain" (Pauper Certificate, Massachusetts State Archives, CO6, series 9x, Box 30).