

Monday, Sept 25, 1967

My dear Mrs. Fairbanks,

It was nice to hear from you. If you kept a carbon of your letter of 9/21, you will note that I am answering you in the order in which you mention the subjects.

1. I strongly suspect that the Bennetts were buried in the old Cemetery in Island Grove, since they lived here in my neighborhood on Plymouth Street. If you have a copy of "Yesteryears," the booklet put out in 1962 on Old Abington's 250th birthday, you will see a snapshot taken there before it was abandoned ~~and~~ the stones moved. The stones that remained, after being damaged by hurricanes and lost through pilferage, were mostly moved to Mt. Vernon. Mt. V. was not established until 1853. The local D.A.R. chapter was largely responsible for grouping many old stones in the north end of Mt. V. and having them repaired.

2. Re. spelling of BROWN or BROWNE, I have seen Rev. Samuel Browne's own signatures on two original documents in the Probate records at Plymouth, where he, himself, wrote it both ways. I believe that the terminal E was a sort of curlicue flourish at first, but I try to be consistent in spelling this family's name, and I use the E form as a sort of courtesy to his 5-G-grandson, Walston E. Browne, of 228 Washington Street, Abington, of whom I'm very fond, and who spells it this way.

3. I am certain that the Historical Society of Old Abington would dearly love to receive anything connected with the town's first minister. Their headquarters is in the Dyer Building, Centre Avenue, Abington, and the Society's current Curator is the hostess in the building from 6:30 to 8:30 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. She is Mrs. Gracie Tupper and she lives at 77 Centre Avenue., Abington.

4. I keep a running study on Indians and Negroes all the time. I file by all sorts of different ways, and cross-index, and post back and forth, etc. It involves a great deal of monotonous detail.

I think that the Browne slaves probably belonged to the minister's wives. At least, when his widow, Mrs. Mary (Pratt) Browne married Squire Josiah Torrey, the slaves went with her and B. Hobart tells some tales about them after they were the property of Squire Torrey.

ROSE was the mother of TONY (ANTHONY DWIGHT). In one place, Cyrus Nash, our diarist, says that she was a Spanish Indian. Ref. C.Nash, D-X:23.

TONY's first wife was BATHSHEBA, an Indian. Rev. Browne baptized their children: Shubal in 1736, Isaac in 1738, a second Isaac in 1742, Bathsheba in 1746, and Ezra in 1748. Bathsheba seems to have predeceased Tony, and in 1787, when he was in his 70's, he married VIOLET TRAVELLOR, another Indian.

Tony was intractable, according to the B. Hobart stories, which is expected since he was part Indian and less amenable to discipline than the African Negroes. Cyrus Nash says that he was half Negro and half Indian, and was a "large stout man." He is mentioned in the account book of Samuel Porter, tanner and shoemaker, and the cost of mending his shoes is charged against Rev. Browne in 1734. Other local residents also paid for having his shoes mended, because when a slave was "let out" to work for others, they assumed upkeep on shoes.

Apparently Tony was in dire straits after the slaves were "freed" under the Massachusetts state Constitution, and we read in the report of the Abington Town Meeting of 6 Apr 1789: "10ly. Voted that Mr. Jacob Smith Jr. and Mr. John King be appointed agents to enquire into the affair of Anthony Dwight a Negro man and prosecute the Heirs of Woodbridge Brown, late of Abington, Dec^d, if they think best."

Tony died 10 Feb 1801, aged 88, 90, or 100, according to different local opinions. The 88 is probably correct, and would make him be born about 1713, or just after Rev. Browne came to Abington. Thus, ^{his mother} he may have originated in Newbury, and possibly been a slave of the Woodbridge family, who were quite well-to-do. Tony died in a little shack on High Street, on the Squire Torrey farm.

CUFF ROSIER was born about 1727. Rev. Browne paid Samuel Porter for repair of his shoes, too, in 1734. After Cuff became the property of Squire Torrey, he served in the Old French War. In 1757, he married DINAH NUMMUCK, an Indian. Squire Torrey seems to have sent him again to serve in the American Revolution, although by then he was in his 50's. He died in service. Then Squire Torrey apparently sent Cuffy Jr., and his brother, Silas, to fill Abington's quota, for we find records of service for both of them in the Revolution.

CAESAR was also Rev. Browne's slave, and the minister paid for his shoe repair in 1734. His wife was FLORA. Their daughter, BESSIE, was born in 1734. In one place she is called BESSIE KOBACK. Her son, however, was BRISTER GOULD, born 1759, after Bessie belonged to Squire Torrey. I make no attempt to explain the various surnames, but I think Brister may be a corruption of Bristol, and may suggest seafaring experience for one of his forebears, since they sometimes had names of ports of call.

Squire Torrey devised a plot of land in North Abington to Brister Gould, and the Gould family lived there for many years. His grandchildren worked in shoe factories. The family burial plot used to show 5 unmarked grave mounds there. It is interesting to me that Brister Gould married, in 1797, PHEBE SQUIN ROSIER who was a direct descendant of MASSASOIT, and that is how Abington became so closely associated with the last descendants of this line of Indian royalty.

JEFF also had his shoe repair paid by Rev. Browne in 1734.

KATE was owned by Rev. Browne, according to B. Hobart. She died in 1813, aged 84, making her birth somewhere around 1824.

MICAH served in the Old French War, and later died on the Squire Torrey farm, which leads me to believe that he may have originated as one of the Browne slaves too.

Only the more well-to-do settlers owned slaves. Daniel Axtell, who was in Abington 1707-1712, and preceded Samuel Porter as the tanner, had 2 men named NERO and POMPEY. His account book shows items charged now and again as repair of somebody's "garl's" shoes, which may refer to a Negro or Indian girl, since items for daughters usually are indicated by names.

John Harden, the blacksmith, owned PERO and gave permission for him to marry in 1764.

Col. Aaron Hobart, who had the iron foundry, owned JACK and BILLAH, his wife.

Dr. David Jones owned BETHENA, and his 2d wife (widow of Dr. Nathaniel White of South Weymouth) brought Toby Torbet with her when she came to Abington to live.

Lt. Alexander Nash of Weymouth owned HANNIBAL and his Indian wife PENELOPE. After they were freed they lived in an ancient shack near where the abandoned outdoor movie stands on Adams Street until Hannibal died, and then Penelope went back to Weymouth.

James Nash, who owned the sawmill in Abington Centre, had a Negro known as "Old Moses," also called MOSES SASH. After slaves were freed under the state Constitution, the town of Abington sued the Nash family for the upkeep of Old Moses.

The French family had MINGO run the mill for them near where the French Stream comes under East Water Street in ~~Rockland~~. This was in the earliest 1700's.

In 1735, David Porter, who had a brickyard, paid for repair of EDWARD's shoes, and since we do not otherwise account for this name, Edward may have been a slave.

Daniel Reed, who was an extensive farmer, has items charged in 1735 for repair of "your Neger's" shoes in Samuel Porter's account book. Reed may have owned BEN or CHARLES or both.

Dr. Gridley Thaxter got FRANCIS BOOTMAN, otherwise known as FRANK, a former slave of Gen. Benjamin Lincoln of Hingham, when he married Sarah Lincoln in 1783. Frank died in the Thaxter house, 409 Washington Street, Abington, on 13 July 1821.

Elder William Pratt, who preceded Rev. Browne as lay religious leader in this community (he was here from 1705 to 1710) had two slaves he brought with him from South Carolina. They were HEBER and HAGAR. They took the surname HONESTY. After the Elder died, Mrs. Pratt manumitted them and gave them a farm in Easton.

Rev. Browne, however, seems to have had the largest number of slaves. succeeded, of course, by Squire Josiah Torrey of 237 High Street, Abington.

5. As for getting prints of documents from the Registry of Deed in Plymouth, they are in position to furnish both photostats and Xerox prints. but only for direct orders, giving exact volume and page numbers, and orders must be prepaid. Photostats used to be 60¢ per page - the price may have gone up, of course. The Probate records used to be \$1.00 per person, regardless of number of pages, I believe, but that may be changed now, too. They also, must have exact references. Neither department will do any research whatsoever, or any checking in the index. They do not have sufficient personnel.