

DAVIS-SMITH GARRISON

Demolished, 1880, Lubberland Road, Newmarket, N: H.

By B. B. P. Greene

It stood, as a garrison should, on rising ground, and overlooking Great Bay; so that, by land or sea, no foe in birch canoe, or skulking bands through woodland, could make approach, while watchfulness was the word of command at the garrison. It was built in 1695, doubtless to replace the one destroyed by the Indians in 1694.

The human interest in things past has outlived the garrison itself, which, the pity of it, should have been preserved. Its foundations were firm and solid the day of its execution, when the huge hand-wrought nails held with tenacious grip to the old oak beams, clinging to the past, that lived and died under its low hung eaves, feeling again the first blow that sent the great spikes home, driven to their resting place by one David Davis, who was the owner and builder. And a throb of pride it absorbed from that little family when safely they gathered about its old stone hearth in a feeling of security and comfort, although they and their neighbors had much to worry about, for the Indians had left a mark so deadly in 1694, that soldiers were sent to guard and range the woods in watch for signs of trouble.

In August, 1696, David Davis was killed not far from the strong portals of his home. After his death soldiers were stationed at this block-house, and other garrisons were guarded in the same way. Men were detailed to patrol this zone that had felt to the uttermost the dreadfulness of Indian warfare. Later the wife and children of David Davis left this place, so filled with horrors, and the widow's son built a garrison at Packer's Falls.

Joseph Smith was born in 1640. When twenty years of age he received

a "grant" and also bought land at Oyster River (Durham). Joseph was a Quaker, and not inclined to fight, but he owned a garrison-house, feeling that this "preparedness" was a most effective weapon for peace. And Joseph also had in his oldest boy John, a son who stood for the acme of efficiency. With courage and keenness he learned to fight his own battles all through life. We doubt if his father, being a Quaker, might not have been one of the "parents" who objected to this rule presented as early as 1645. It was ordered that "The youth from ten to sixteen years, should be instructed upon y^e usual dayes in y^e exerci e of armes, as small guns, halfe pike, bows and arrows, provided the parents do not object."

July 17, 1695, was the day of the attack at Oyster River by Indians, when so many garrisons were destroyed. This one of Joseph Smith's stood through the fight; and no doubt this son (twenty-five years old, and holding the title of Captain) with his dauntless courage helped more than any other, in its preservation. And just one month before he had brought home to his father's house Susannah Chesley—a June bride—so that all his hopes, and all his love were sheltered inside its staunch old walls during that frightful battle. Susannah was undoubtedly a helpmate in every sense of the word, for she came of a brave and fearless race. Her father, Captain Thomas Chesley, was known to have much skill in the methods of Indian warfare, but it availed him little on November 15, 1697, when he was slain by the Indians near Johnson's Creek.

After the death of David Davis and

the removal of his family to the Packer's Falls Garrison, Captain John Smith became the owner of the Lubberland Garrison, and took his wife and baby to this new home on the shore of "Esquamscott," which was the musical name the Indians had given Great Bay.

From this time we seem to know more of the doings and beings in and about the garrison. The Smiths, father and sons, were hospitable, and this new home saw merry, peaceful, glad as well as the saddest sort of times, before this family deserted the old fortress. For long years after they settled in this house, the dread danger of redmen hung over them.

In 1702 history speaks of Hilton's scout being "Between John Smith's at Lubberland on the north, and Pickpocket on the south." But hands and brain being busy doing what there was to do, left no time for any fearful outlook. If danger came their way, 'twas met bravely, and when past, was gone.

Captain John Smith started his business life as a land surveyor, but became a rich man, owning all the land starting at the foot of the great hill where Crummet's Creek flows on its way and enters into Great Bay, through all the crooked road you follow that runs up and down along the shore. Stand upon one of its hilltops, and look back from the way you have come after Jack Frost in the night has touched, and the sun with his blazing palette has turned the green to crimson and gold, along the surrounding shores. With their vivid tints against the blue of sky and water it would be hard to find a more perfect view. And Captain John owned about four miles of this pictured view, which would take you to the mouth of the Lamprey River.

From the doorway of the garrison, on Lubberland Road, Great Bay swept in its widest curve before you, with Newington's shore across where the waters narrowed on their way to Little Bay. The garrison stood

where now the highway runs over a corner of its buried cellar.

While living here Captain John did an extensive lumber business. The axes rang where stood the somber pine and hemlock, and where flamed the maple and the russet oak. His saw-mills stood at both the first and second falls of the Lamprey River. Groaning all day they ran up and down "Gate-saws" which they used in those old days, pushed by the power of the water and a "feed-wheel."

A hale and hearty man was this father, with his garrison house open to all with generous freedom, and the best of everything the times could give. The old fire-place seemed to gleam with hospitality. When in fear of Indians, it was headquarters for the military men, and a refuge for the neighbors. At such times the rule of all garrisons was, that the living and expenses for defense were to be shared by all that were housed beneath its roof.

We read of children being baptized at the garrison. Fortune favored the babe born in a warm month, for winter and the chill in the water seemed to make no difference when it came to the saving of their tiny, innocent souls. Too cold to cry—no wonder they went in such numbers, so young, to meet their Saviour. "Believing" parents, would usually present a baby for baptism the Sunday after its birth, and if born on Sunday, they were sometimes baptised the day of their birth.

As only the toughest lived, we suppose they must have given us our New England inheritance of endurance; for courage and endurance were two requisites indispensable to life in those days, and it only left the fittest to survive.

Attendance at church on cold Sundays showed both these heroic virtues to some extent. With a Bible and a gun, they carried little pierced, handled tin boxes, in which were iron trays filled with coals from some generous fire-place that stood

not far from the cold meeting house. This box warmed their feet, and the minister kept warm a body whose mind was lashed and stung with his pictured words.

But it really was a perfect life to live. From the spring time (as the oak leaves reached the size of the ear of a mouse) when they planted their corn, on to the golden harvest, was all in the day's work—the time to fish in the blue waters of the bay, and with their old fowling piece to bring down the wild duck. Beasts and birds in the wild woods there were in plenty. Oysters to be taken from their beds, and at the ebbing of the tide they dug their clams. And after the harvest came the most glorious month of all the year, before the winter settled down—when over the earth lay the frosty brown of fall. And Captain John lived here,—

Where whispering winds made music
As they frolicked with waves on the bay;
Or when winter's blast, and the howl of its
weather,
Made more than a frolic, when both together.
But around the fire, they shut out the night,
While blazing logs gave out their light;
With apples red and hickory nuts,
And cider that sparkled in pewter cups;
They let the wild winds romp on their way,
(Without one wish for a longer stay)
As they go for a rampage with waves on the
bay.
With love and duty, and work and play,
Their lives went on in a wholesome way
That was worth the living—from day to day.—

And here it was that Captain John died in 1774; Susanna, his wife, following him two years later. Before he died, he gave to each son some part of his estate, so that each received a substantial farm. The eldest son, John, was given land between Crommet's Creek (Durham) and the "Homestead plantation." (The homestead and its plantation was divided between the three youngest sons) Joseph the second son, a tract of land at the first falls of the Lamprey River, and Joseph built the three story brick house which was torn down to make room for the present Catholic Church. He was buried

in a cemetery where the railroad station now stands.

Some years before being torn down, this brick house was purchased by a second great-grandson of Colonel Joseph's. This man lived there a number of years. He also bought at one time a part of the "Lubberland" estate, and had the "Old Garrison" demolished in 1880, which came into his possession with the other property purchased.

Samuel, the third son, received the western part of the "Homestead plantation," as it was called, he being one of the three younger sons, among whom this property was divided. The "Homestead," which was the "Garrison," was on the middle portion.

Benjamin, the fourth son, was given the eastern part of the "Homestead plantation" of two hundred and eighty acres. He also owned a farm and built his home where the road turns to "Durham Bridge" (Newmarket). In an old map of 1800, this bridge is called "Picked Rock Bridge," and this rock plainly shows itself when the water has been drawn from the river.

At this place Benjamin also built a mill (said to have stood where the Newmarket Manufacturing Co.'s "Planer" now stands). He was a man of much importance; held the title of Captain, and had the honor to serve when at the age of seventy years, as one of the "Committee of Safety" in the time of the Revolutionary War. He married Jemima, daughter of Deacon Edward Hall, and died at the age of eighty-two. His son Edward married the daughter of Walter Bryant, called "King's Surveyor." This man lived and died, at the age of ninety-seven, in Newmarket. His home stood opposite "Number Four Mill," but was moved in 1870, and now stands on the south side, and in the rear of the building on the corner of Church and Main Streets. The home of his son-in-law (Edward Smith) was a square house

of Colonial build, still standing on the north side of Central Street. When built it was in the old "Bryant garden." Both these men were buried in the family burying ground, where now is High Street.

We seem, with these men, to have wandered away from the old "Garrison," but through the son of this Edward Smith (Walter Byrant Smith), who was born in 1774, have come some things that awakened thoughts of the old building; worn mementos that have been in the hands of those that lived there. One, a pair of quaint old shoes made of leather, but in the style of the present rubber overshoe, with the drop heel (only these are without the *back* of the heel) not as in a sandal, for the hollow heel is there, seemingly made to fit as an overshoe, over a small boot or slipper. Tradition says they came through hands that might, while sitting on the door-sill of the garrison, have tied in little bows their old tape strings.

Where the dirt and dust of ages had collected between the wide old boards of the garrison floor was found a "Pine-Tree" three pence, commonly called a "thripence"; well worn, but the lettering, and the date 1652, with the rude marking of a pine tree, are easily to be seen.

A pair of silver shoe buckles carefully kept for long years, are supposed to have belonged to Benjamin, the fourth son. (Although Benjamin lived in the garrison, he might not have sported the buckles until later.)

An old rusty jackknife was found in the cellar of the old building not long before it was destroyed. It has a horn handle, mounted in brass, and on the conventional scroll of the mount there is engraved the word "Liberty." Was the lettering of that word to mean that it was made in the time of America's Independence, and did it belong to one of the sons of Ebenezer? John and Ebenezer Jr. were young men at that time (but neither married until after the war). They lived in the garrison, for

Ebenezer their father was the youngest son of Captain John, and he, received the "Middle portion" of the "Homestead plantation" which included the "Old Garrison."

History says that Deacon Ebenezer was a man of great worth, but like his brethren, somewhat troubled with "pride of kin."

Across from the garrison, half way down the long slope of green field that borders Great Bay, stand two slate stones—all that are left to mark the resting place of the many that were buried here. One upstanding, well made stone, is in memory of Mr. John Smith 4th—the eldest son of Ebenezer; the other, somewhat larger, has cut in its face a very drooping, weeping willow tree, and underneath is this inscription:

In
Memory of

EBENEZER SMITH ESQ.

Born June 6 1712

Died Jan. 25 1764

Blessed are the dead
who die in the Lord
from hencefourth yea
saith the Spirit, that
they may rest from their
labours and their works
do follow them.

This grave of Captain John's youngest son, lies under the sod given him by his father as "The middle portion"; and all these years its large slate stone has stood face to the Garrison. But the small "Foot-stone"—with the letters E. S. Esq.—has fallen from where it faced the ebbing and the flowing of the waters to and from the sea.

When Deacon Ebenezer died, it left the widow and her children alone in this garrison home. But, not for long, for, in the brave days of old, people seemed more often to put their sorrows behind them. So before the next year's spring came slowly up this way, she married Major George Frost. He was the son of a sister of Sir William Pepperell. Both the bride and groom being prominent people, the wedding was an affair of importance.

Major Frost took his bride to Rye, N. H., where they made their home for six years. Then in 1770 they returned to the garrison to live, and Major Frost died there in 1796.

In following the fortunes of the garrison we find that, when Mrs. (Ebenezer Smith) Frost died in 1816—one hundred years ago—she gave the garrison with thirty-two acres of land to her daughter Margaret (by her first husband). This daughter had married, in 1781, a minister. She was his second wife, and he was thirteen years older than she—a very scholarly man—but tradition says he had a most unholy temper, and was decidedly peevish in his home life.

The cause we know not, but this poor unhappy lady became insane. The reverend gentleman had built a home in Durham (after passing through many hands it stands re-

modeled as “Red Towers”), but after his wife’s mind became broken, the garrison was used as her prison house until she died. After that the building passed from the family.

With all its troublous career, and the tragedies of its youth and age, yet the old place saw long years of peace and happiness. Its need as a garrison was past and gone long before it was deserted.

The Indian roamed no more; his pride was
dead,

And old ambitions all were in their grave.
Little remnants of their blood
That called this Continent their own
Are atoms drifting here and there,
With dwindling bands maybe on lands
That in the old time yesterdays
Were roamed by some ancestral tribe.
And this fertile meadow might
Have grown the pumpkin and the maize,
Whose seed the red men undisturbed
Had scattered here, where on the shore
Of Esquamscott they lived and died.