

JOHN TRIPP, GENTLEMAN, PIONEER, AT WORK.

As the centuries have wheeled into the past, five hundred men, or possibly a thousand, have answered to the unassuming name, John Tripp. It may be supposed that none of these ever once dreamed, that from him should come a man to sit on the American throne. Yet this honor came to John the Founder, in prospect, and in very fact to one of his descendants.

All that we find recorded of him shows that John Trippe of Portsmouth did his daily task with his might, looking for the Light, and in the fear of God-as-He-was-conceived by them of the Friends' persuasion.

As plain country squire, at many points in old England; as lawyer; as physician; as clergyman of the established, stereotyped sort; as colonial deputy; as Mayor and representative of his King, John Tripp was always "John Tripp, Gentleman".

Manifesting in multifarious forms, he played always an estimable part, and no records of John Tripp show that he was ever less than an honorable man, strictly "on the job" that fell to him in his then sphere.

But the very formal term, John Tripp, Gentleman, found in the old records, was brought over from England, even as was John himself. The line back into the mists of the conqueror's time is so long, that no one may now tell how many John Tripps trod English soil. The family name was certainly John, and a common custom of giving the names of the founder of the family, and of the father and grandfather to the elder sons in every family, held for untold generations among the Tripps.

Ancient deeds long held by English Tripps, even in west Eng-

land, testify to the family grip on the soil throughout many centuries. English genealogists seem to agree that Canterbury was the place of inception, as far as history shows, and one of the standard English Genealogical firms informs us that no Tripp family there known can be traced to any but the one root in Kent. It is of record that a Tripp of 1325 held right to a coat of arms; but the date of its conferment is missing.

Sir Charles Tripp, who bore it, was a well-known lawyer of the Middle Temple, London, whose arms are both shown and described. He was son of that English John Trippe, Gentleman, who lived both in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. His father (and probably he, himself) saw life as it was keenly lived in France as well as in England. For the father, according to the English heralds, was John Trippe, vice-marshal of Calais.

A very gorgeous John Tripp, Gentleman, in crimson and gold, executed the city ordinances of Hull, as its Mayor, in 1669. We find him under the heading "John Tripp, 1660" in a most quaint old English book of notables who had been schoolmates in Lincoln county or elsewhere. The style is often humorous, but the English owe the author a great debt for historical items lacking elsewhere. This John was Chamberlain; then Sheriff; then Mayor of Hull, 1669.

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John the Founder's appearance in Portsmouth, was in 1638; in Providence, under date of May 16, 1648. He had come over in the same ship with William Hall in 1635. His name appears on the organization list of Portsmouth as John Trippe.

On this list appeared the names of eleven families with whom the Tripps were to intermarry. One of these was that of Anthonie

Paine, John's father-in-law; another, that of William Haule (Hall), three of whose children became "in-laws" to John Tripp, later. Thus, the founding of Portsmouth seems rather a family affair.

The remnant of the earliest records of Portsmouth now available contains no less than 80 references to John Tripp, the Founder of the New England line of English Tripps. The indexers agree that the spellings Trip, Tripe, and Tripp belong also to the family of Trippe.

In 1649, we find John serving on a jury; as also in 1650, 1653, etc. By this time, three fourths the recorded names are of those related, or to be related by marriage to the first John Tripp, and to assist in carrying on his family line.

In 1651, he is clerk of "the wayghts and measures". In the same year he makes an agreement with Ralph Earle concerning a line fence. This precise paper fills one and one half pages of the records, as printed. It was signed in the presence of four witnesses, one of whom was Benedict Arnold. The meat of it was that each signer should play fair with the other, as to reciprocity on stones and in the work of building the stone fence; a chief object being to "make their sayed landes several to each of their private uses."

John was between two fires, in that Ralph Earl's land joined him on both the north and the south sides. One point of the agreement read thus: "From yeare to yeare, so long as those sayd lots ly open together, Earl's to Tripp's aforementioned, that they will not on either of these said lots damnify each other by Cattell there put by their order." This agreement was considered so important that the heirs of both signers are included in its terms, and a forfeit of twenty pounds sterling is laid on the failure; to be "payed by the Ptie defective, unto the other Ptie engaged therein".

Formal seals completed the document, when signed.

It was a wise move to block trouble with bounding neighbors. I can recall, as grandchild of New York pioneers six generations later, the threats of law-suits and the loud words following the neglect of fences, which led to raids by neighbors' cattle, on growing grain.

Having served his town freely and well whenever needed, John Tripp came to the honor of being chosen Committeeman for the Generall Court. This was an important term, for this committee was authorized to meet with those of the other towns, "at the day Nuport neighbors shall apoint, with as full power to act as if the towne were present."

The same "Meetinge of the Inhabitants of Portsmouth" that chose John Tripp as representative, voted also, "that Assamequin shall have his coate payd him forthwith for his rent of the medows on the maine land, on the north side of Roade Ilande".

In 1655, John Tripp was chosen "commissioner of the Colony, to transact the busines of the Generall Court to be held at Providence at the usuall tyme". He here appears as "Mr. John Tripp." Serving with him were John Roome, John Briggs, Thomas Lauton and Mr. Thomas Brownell.

Portsmouth, by this time, was becoming important. Even among this goodly people thieves were abroad, it seems; who, if they could but remove cattle from the island, could then snap their fingers at all authority. The ferries became increasingly important. Thus, in August of the year 1666, the town meeting appointed John Tripp, his son-in-law's father, William Hall and two others "to survaie and view all cattell that shal be henceforth transported off the Iland and to take the names of all such as transport

cattell, the day of the month when, the number of the Generall Cattel, with there severall ear marks, and if any have cattel that have not their own eare marke or that have other marke or marques then ther owen the survayers are hereby required to make stopp of them, unless thay give satisfaction to the survayers how they cam by those cattel, so differently marked.. and the survayers are to see the cattell boated and if any carry cattell off the Iland in the night, though survayed before, shall have a survayer to see them at ther going of shore or shall forfeit tenn pounds and stand to further sensuer of the tounne".

Serving frequently on the Town Council, John was chosen also in 1661, with five others, to serve as a "Court of Comitioners" at Portsmouth. The following year he was chosen to serve on the next General Court of commissioners to be held at Warwick.

The report of the town meeting for February, 1663 notes that four "Comitioners or deputyes" were chosen to serve at a General Court to be held at Newport. Of these, was Mr. John Tripp. Another was his brother-in-law, Mr. Lott Strange; who had married Alice Paine, sister to John Tripp's wife Mary.

In the meantime, John's family is increasing and maturing. The year 1666 sees John appear on the records as "Mr. John Tripp senior". He serves this year on the Grand Jury. A new duty -- of Rate making is laid upon him in 1666. He is chosen for the Grand Jury (with two others): He is kept, as in most years, in the post of Surveyor of Cattle, and is again chosen deputy to the General Assembly. In 1667, the town chooses him to serve, with Albro, Cooke, Almy, William Hall and Sanford, to devise a method of preventing "the destruction of wood and timber of this township" and some method of redress for the town.

In June of 1667, John Tripp is once more chosen as one of the four Portsmouth "deputies for ye next Generall Court". The next year he is sent to the October General Court, as deputy. In 1669, he serves again in the General Assembly, held at Newport in May of that year. In 1672 he serves in the April Assembly, and also in that of October.

John Tripp, the Founder, is now aging. He has but six more years in which to prove his value. But during these years he is allowed no surcease of work. In this year of 1672, he becomes moderator of the Portsmouth meeting; to which office he is chosen each year thereafter up to and including 1675. As rate-maker; as surveyor of cattle; as keen-eyed representative of his town in many capacities, he does his unhurried and faithful duty. As moderator, he is hampered by rules hitherto unknown to the presiding officers; since, in the last previous meeting, the town council voted that for the future, "noe Towne meetinge shall have power to act.. in affaires Relatinge to the Towne Except there be at least the number of fifteene prescent at the Said meetinge. And further ordered that for the future, noe Moderator of the Towne Meeting Shall presume to desolve Such Said Meeting without the Major vote of the said Meetinge. And if any Moderator shall from the meeting withdraw himself, without the leave of the major part of the meetinge, it shall be in the power of that meetinge to elect another to the place of Moderator."

In 1675, Mr. John Tripp was chosen by the town council for three several offices besides that of moderator. One of these was that of prover and sealer of weights and measures, "accordinge as the law of this Collony hath provided." In 1676, 1677 and 1678 he is still filling important town offices. This last year sees his

last appearance on the records.

In April of the year 1679, "the widow Mary Tripp" receives from the Town Council "a License for one year to Sell victuals and drink to Travelers and to afford them entertainment as may be needful and Convenient, they first giveing bond according to Law for the keeping of good orders and do also pay into the Treasury ten Shillings for Each License".

So far as the records indicate, the public work of John Tripp was never spectacular; but these were sober-minded men, and the same might be said of almost any man of record at Portsmouth during this period. This John was most surely a man of keen mind and great personal integrity, for his name comes into prominence in every essential matter, and wherever money is the crux of the situation, except in connection with the Treasury. But William Wodell was long the Treasurer for the town of Portsmouth. He was also many times a deputy from Portsmouth.

As, at this period, every privilege that high authority could offer was for members of the established church-- the church of England, and that every indignity and tax that could be conceived was visited upon non-members, under many of the colonial governments, we may imagine how much need the quiet group of Friends had of the stiff neck which was supposed to be their crowning attribute.

The "Sufferings of Friends" was a frequent term in their books of Record. By his "sufferings", at one period, any Friend came to be ranked very high in the estimation of his Order. John Simcock, close friend and valued counselor of William Penn, was a notable "sufferer"; nor did the least conspicuous escape his tax of scorn and obloquy, anguish and financial loss. Costly, indeed, was it to "follow The Light", in their time.

In 1658, Roger Williams wrote: "It was not price nor money that could have purchased Rhode Island. Rhode Island was obtained by love; by the love and favor which that honorable gentleman, Sir Henry Vane, and myself, had with that great Sachem, Miantonomie".

Nine years after John Tripp signed the Aquidneck group covenant, he set his name to a marvelous politico-human document in Providence. Its basis and tenor were human love and human liberty. It, too, was a covenant, its purpose being to place upon record; "That we are not wilfully opposite, nor careless and senceless, and thereby meanes of our own and others' ruine and destruction. And especially in Testimonye of our fidelitye and Cordiall affections unto one another heere present, so that there may be a currant, peaceable and Comfortable proceedinge."

JOHN, PELEG AND JOSEPH TRIPP, CITIZENS.

At the time when the first John appeared in the Generall Court. Mr. Roger Williams was chosen to be assistant. This Assembly was called by the Islanders the "Generall Court of Election". It was then ordered that six men should be chosen for each town, in whom the General Court should be continued. Also that the Generall Court of Tryall should be held "by course", wherever the actions should arise, and at such times as the committee should choose. This seems supplementary to the previous work of the General Assembly.

On this committee appeared the names of Weeden, Lawton, Almy, Briggs, Wilbor and Green: into whose families the descendants of John Tripp were soon to marry.

The year before the death of the first John Tripp, Peleg, the second son of that Founder, appears on the town Council, at the age of 35. In the October meeting of this year, his brother, Joseph,