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COMPRISING

THE EXPEDITIONS OF CAPTAIN JOHN LOVE-
WELL AND HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH THE
INDIANS - - - - - *Frederick Kidder*
ACCOUNT OF LOVEWELL'S EXPEDITIONS,
Samuel Penhallow
JOHN CHAMBERLAIN, THE INDIAN FIGHTER,
AT PIGWACKET - - - *George W. Chamberlain, B. S.*

WILLIAM ABBATT

141 EAST 25TH STREET,

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JOHN CHAMBERLAIN,

THE INDIAN FIGHTER AT PIGWACKET

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JOHN CHAMBERLAIN, THE INDIAN FIGHTER AT PIGWACKET

SEVERAL historical writers in the vicinity of Boston have given to the public, during the years 1895 and 1896, long discussions relative to the part performed by John Chamberlain, of Groton, while under the command of Captain John Lovell in the Pigwacket fight of 1725.

It is the purpose of this paper to give a summary of the life of this man in general, and of his part at the Pigwacket fight in particular.

Born in the town of Chelmsford, March 29, 1692, he was the eldest child of Thomas and Elizabeth (Hall) Chamberlain, who lived first in Chelmsford, but later in Groton. His life had its beginning in the earlier half of the Indian war period of New England (1675-1725).

His grandfather, Thomas Chamberlain of Chelmsford, who was both senior and junior, was a soldier in King Philip's war, being stationed at the frontier garrison in Groton on November 30, 1675. He was probably the Thomas Chamberlain who served in Syll's Company and also in Poole's Company in 1676. Thomas, the father, and Thomas, the grandfather, were both stationed at the garrison in Chelmsford on March 16, 1691-92.

In 1697, when John Chamberlain had reached the age of five, he first listened to the story of the capture of Hannah Dustin at Haverhill, less than twenty-five miles from his home. At the fireside he often heard rehearsed her heroic bravery in scalping her captors on the island at Penacook. In 1702, he was thrilled by news of the massacre of the Rev. Thomas Weld, the first minister of old Dunstable, within ten miles of his own home.

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John Chamberlain was not the author's ancestor.

In 1704, in the same year that the fearful slaughter at Deerfield occurred, the Indians carried their guerrilla warfare into Groton, where they killed one or two men in the southwesterly part of the town. On May 8, 1706, at a town meeting held in Groton, "Thay ded by uot [vote] declare they would and doe desire Thomas Chamberill [lain's] mill may bee uphelde by a solgar or solgars for the good of the town." Therefore, John Chamberlain was cradled and reared in the midst of Indian warfare and vigilant defense.

Of his education nothing is known except that his signature to a petition to the judge of probate for Middlesex County was plainly written. It was probably as good as that of the average man of that time.

Thomas Chamberlain, the father, removed from Chelmsford to Groton before March 10, 1699. He was a wheelwright, and on the last-mentioned date bought of John Cadey, Sr., fifty acres of land at "Baddacook" by "Brown Loafe Brooke," near "Cowpond Medow" in Groton. The inventory of his estate was taken March 30, 1710. On the preceding day John Heald of Concord was appointed guardian to "John, son of Thomas Chamberlain, late of Groton, a minor in ye 18th yeare of his age." In 1713, John Chamberlain reached his majority, and on June 30 of that year the estate of his father was settled. Abigail, the widow (who was the second wife), received her dower. John received "two-thirds of the mill, housing, stream and lands in Groton," conditional upon his paying the other ten children £2, 17s., 6½d. each. Here at a place called "Baddacook," a little southeast of the village of old Groton, John Chamberlain lived from 1699 to 1729.

On September 4, 1724, Thomas Blanchard and Nathan Cross, both of old Dunstable, were captured within the limits of the city of Nashua, New Hampshire, by a band of Indians, who carried them captives into Canada. A small party of Dunstable men pursuing the Indians some distance up the Merrimack valley, the entire party was killed excepting Josiah Farwell. For this reason John Lovewell, Josiah Farwell and Jonathan Robbins, all of Dunstable, petitioned the General Court of Massachusetts for leave to

raise a company "to keep out in the woods for several months together in order to kill and destroy their enemy Indians." Their petition was granted November 17, 1724, and they were promised for each male scalp brought in one hundred pounds, which, according to Kidder, was equivalent to one hundred and thirty-six dollars.

John Lovewell, a son of John Lovewell (who by some authorities is said to have been first of Weymouth), a native of old Dunstable, was commissioned captain, and conducted three expeditions northward in quick succession. John Chamberlain, however, is not named in the list of the sixty-two men of the second expedition, but all agree that he was one of the forty-six men who started on the third expedition, and that he was one of the thirty-three who met and resisted more than twice their number of Indians on the north shore of what is now Lovewell's pond in the town of Fryeburg, Maine, on May 8, 1725, O. S.

Four accounts of this fight were published within one and one-half years of its occurrence. The first and second, published on the seventeenth and twenty-fourth of May, 1725, in the *Boston News-Letter* and the *New England Courant* respectively, make no mention of Paugus, the chief of the Pigwacket tribe, nor of any of the surviving English except Ensign Seth Wyman, who took command on the death of Capt. Lovewell, Lieut. Farwell and Ensign Robbins, near the beginning of the engagement. Wyman had returned to Boston and been granted a captain's commission by the Lieutenant-Governor, William Dummer, before May 24, 1725. The *New England Courant* of that date states that "His Honour the Lieut.-Governour has been pleased to grant a Captain's commission to Lieut. Wyman, who distinguished himself with great courage and conduct during the whole engagement." The other accounts were written by the Rev. Thomas Symmes of Bradford, Massachusetts, and by Judge Samuel Penhallow of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Each of these accounts is invaluable; both say that Paugus, the chief of the Pigwacket tribe, was killed during the action, but neither state by whom the deed was done.

If John Chamberlain killed the old chief, the evidence of such fact rests entirely upon widely disseminated traditions. If Ensign Seth Wyman performed the act resulting in the death of that "vile and bloody wretch," as Penhallow calls the chief, the evidence for such conclusion is found in an anonymous ballad of uncertain age and veracity; and I am asked to choose between Scylla and Charybdis.

The Chamberlain-Paugus tradition was first published at Fryeburg, Maine, in the year 1799, by Elijah Russell in his edition of Rev. Thomas Symmes's "Memoirs of the Fight at Piggwacket." It runs as follows:

Several of the Indians, particularly Paugus, their chief, were well known to Lovewell's men, and frequently conversed with each other during the engagement. In the course of the battle Paugus and John Chamberlain discoursed familiarly with each other; their guns had become foul from frequent firing; they washed their guns at the pond, and the latter assured Paugus that he should kill him; Paugus also menaced him, and bid defiance to his insinuations. When they had prepared their guns they loaded and discharged them, and Paugus fell.

This story was printed seventy-four years after the battle occurred, and one year after Noah Johnson, the last survivor of the battle, had died. Was this story a fabrication invented by Elijah Russell? Did it exist before 1799 in other parts of New England? Does it contain any of the elements of truth?

In 1846, the Rev. Stephen Thompson Allen delivered an historical address at the centennial anniversary of the town of Merrimack, New Hampshire. In that address, which has the appearance of being truthful and scholarly, he alludes to one of the early settlers of that town, a man whom I have traced in the state and provincial papers of New Hampshire as a provincial representative of Merrimack from 1756 to 1775 inclusive. That man was Capt. John Chamberlain, who erected the first mills at "Souhegan Falls" in 1734. He was a large land owner at

“Souhegan Falls,” “Natticook,” “Benton’s Farm,” and “Narraganset Township No. 5.”

In his address Mr. Allen says:—

It is by many supposed that this Chamberlain is the same that killed Paugus, the Indian chief in Lovewell’s fight. But such is not the fact. They were cousins, and from a descendant of the family I learn that to distinguish them from each other, one was called “Paugus John” and the other “Souhegan John.”

Continuing, Mr. Allen says:

Souhegan John Chamberlain married [Hannah] a daughter of Lieut. [Josiah] Farwell, who died of wounds received in Lovewell’s fight. Souhegan John Chamberlain lived until the year 1792.

Mr. Allen learned these facts of a descendant of “Souhegan” John, and published them within fifty-two years of his death. If they are true they show what? That Paugus John Chamberlain was so called during his lifetime. Is it reasonable to suppose that the name “Paugus” should have been affixed after the year 1799 to John Chamberlain, who had then been dead forty-four years? If it was not affixed after 1799, but was an appellation of his lifetime, it could not have had its origin in Elijah Russell, but must have originated from some other source.

But Souhegan John Chamberlain’s wife Hannah was the daughter of Lieut. Josiah and Hannah (Lovewell) Farwell. Her father was killed in the Pigwacket fight, as also was her uncle, her mother’s brother, the intrepid Capt. John Lovewell. May we not believe that this woman frequently heard the incidents of the battle related by those who were eye-witnesses, and may we not suppose that she had more than a passing interest in every particular, especially as her father and her uncle both fell on the battlefield? May we not also suppose that she knew that Paugus John Chamberlain was so called because he shot Paugus?

In 1890, I found a tradition in the Chamberlain family concerning the origin of that family in America. It was told by one Jacob Chamberlain of Chelsea to his wife before 1735. About 1777 she related it to her grandson, Gen. William Chamberlain of Peacham, Vermont, once a lieutenant-governor of that state. He wrote it down in 1820. After six years of research on the earlier families of the name, I am prepared to say that that tradition contains some of the elements of truth, but is not literally true. A correspondence and acquaintance with several genealogists have brought to my attention other family traditions, not true in letter, but resting on the foundation of more or less truth. From these facts I am led to believe that traditions of long standing contain some of the elements of truth.

The story of John Chamberlain would seem to have come to us from other sources. Caleb Butler, a native of Pelham, New Hampshire, a graduate of Dartmouth College in 1800, and a tutor there in 1801, removed to Groton in 1802. After many years of research he published his History of Groton in 1848. On page 104 he gives the story of John Chamberlain and Paugus, mentioning in a foot-note his authorities. As the story is somewhat different from Russell's, I give it in Butler's words:

Some time in the day the gun of John Chamberlain, of Groton, becoming foul by continued firing, he undertook to wash and cleanse it at the pond. While in this act, he espied Paugus, whom he personally knew, performing the same process upon his gun at a small distance. A challenge was immediately given and accepted, each confiding in his own dexterity, and predicting the speedy fall of his antagonist. Chamberlain, trusting to the priming of his gun by a thump on the ground, had time to take deliberate aim, while Paugus was priming from his horn. Chamberlain's ball reached Paugus's heart just as he was in the act of firing. His ball passed over Chamberlain's head.

Notice how Butler continues:

After this event there was a short respite. The Indians

withdrew. Ensign Wyman and Chamberlain crept unperceived after them, and found them formed in a circle around one in the center, whom there were qualifying, it was supposed, for a chief instead of the deceased Paugus. Wyman fired and killed this intended chief. Then both hastened back to their fellows at the pond.

Compare the above paragraph with one sentence of the *New England Courant*, of May 24, 1725, already referred to. It reads: "About two hours before night the Indians drew off, and presently came on again." One cannot help thinking that Butler's relation contains some truth.

As to authorities, his foot-note states that the general account of the fight was taken from printed sources, and some of the incidents were from the lips of the wife of Josiah Johnson, one of the men. In the same connection he writes that this woman was thirteen years old when the battle was fought, that she lived in Woburn, where Johnson belonged, and afterwards married him. "In the latter part of her life," continues Butler, "she lived in my father's family [at Pelham], often told the story, and always told it alike, agreeing with the printed account in general and adding some particulars." From Butler's statement as to how he obtained the list of Lovewell's men, it is inferred that he never saw Russell's edition of Symmes's "Memoirs."

It seems to me that we are warranted in concluding that this story was not a fabrication invented by Elijah Russell, a newspaper editor of uncertain character. If we accept Butler, may we not see that the part performed by Seth Wyman and the part performed by John Chamberlain would, in the absence of positive statements, end in confusion.

In 1824, ninety-nine years after the battle, and twenty-five years after the Chamberlain-Paugus story had first been published in the Russell edition of Symmes's "Memoirs of the Fight," Farmer and Moore published at Concord, New Hampshire, in the third volume of their "Historical Collections" a ballad entitled "The Song of Lovewell's Fight." It is here stated

that Seth Wyman "shot the old chief Paugus which did the foe defeat." In their introductory note the editors affirm that the author of the ballad is unknown, that it is about one hundred years old, and that it was sung throughout a considerable portion of New Hampshire and Massachusetts for many years.

If Wyman shot Paugus, and many throughout New Hampshire and Massachusetts sang this ballad for many years, why did not the old people ascribe to Wyman this fact? Why did Wyman's neighbors accord that act—not to their own townsman who had received praises from the newspapers and a captain's commission from the commonwealth—but to John Chamberlain, a private? Why did not Sarah Wyman, the widow of Seth Wyman, in her petition to the Great and General Court in 1726, in giving the particulars of her husband's military record, incidentally refer to his Paugus combat if the ballad story were true?

As early as 1865, Frederic Kidder in his "Expeditions of Capt. John Lovewell," asserted that the ballad is true, and that not John Chamberlain but another slew Paugus. In his sketch of John Chamberlain he gives these facts. Why did he not in his biographical sketch of Seth Wyman accord to him the honor which he denied to Chamberlain? Did it seem to Mr. Kidder that the ballad, which he would have his readers believe is the "very best authority," is strong enough for a destructive argument against the Chamberlain-Paugus story; but that it was not of sufficient strength for a constructive argument for his Wyman-Paugus theory? Consistency seems to require that Wyman should have had not only a widely-extended tradition among the common people of such fact, but that his biography should also have contained such a statement. The *New England Courant* of September 11, 1725, gives ten lines on the death of Wyman. Why did it not refer to the killing of Paugus, if by that Wyman did defeat the foe?

When it is remembered that a great poet, a renowned professor in the most learned university of America, in writing what has become classic, places Priscilla, the wife of John Alden, for

her wedding tour upon a "snow-white bull" before any cattle had been brought to the Plymouth Colony, the immortal Longfellow cannot be excepted in stating that poetry, however beautiful, is not historic truth.

What value, then, shall we place upon a single statement of an anonymous ballad first published ninety-nine years after the battle it describes occurred? One statement of the ballad is contrary to all contemporary accounts, viz., that by the death of Paugus the foe was defeated. Since this ballad is untruthful in one fact, may we not consider it untrustworthy on every fact not corroborated by the narrations of that time?

But Mr. Kidder prejudices his own argument by saying that "we trust that the story [of Chamberlain and Paugus] will not again be republished as historical truth." In the absence of documentary evidence reason dictates that circumstantial and traditional evidence is suggestive and to some extent reliable. John Chamberlain has such evidence. Seth Wyman was accorded by Symmes the honor of killing the chief of the powwow during the respite, as Butler relates. It is likely that he shot both Paugus and the new red chief, and that Symmes should have accorded him the less important service without ascribing to him the more important act in the battle?

It is not claimed, however, that the other traditions relating to Chamberlain and the son of Paugus, and growing out of this one, are true; but the bottom fact that John Chamberlain shot the old chief Paugus on the shore of Lovewell's Pond, on that memorable May 8, 1725, must, in my opinion, await a more critical investigation before the honor can be consistently denied him.

After the Pigwacket fight, John Chamberlain, although reported by Symmes as wounded during the action, returned to his farm and corn-mill—the Chamberlain homestead—at "Baddacook," in Groton. On May 31, 1727, the township of Suncook (now Pembroke, New Hampshire), on the Merrimack River, was granted by Massachusetts to sixty grantees who served in Lovewell's expeditions. John Chamberlain was one of the grantees,

and on April 12, 1729, he sold all his right and title to said lands to Joseph Gilson, of Groton, for twenty pounds and ten shillings, equivalent then to the paltry sum of twenty-seven dollars and eighty-eight cents. His deed to Gilson recorded at Middlesex Registry, Liber 30, page 106, mentions that the tract of land described was recently granted "to the Officers and Soldiers lately in the service of the province under the command of Capt. John Lovewell, deceased, and others, in an expedition to Pig-wacket against the Indian enemy, and which shall hereafter accrew and fall to me as one of the soldiers under said Capt. Lovewell."

On the fifth of January of the same year, 1729, he sold the Baddacook homestead to Samuel Woods, Sr., of Groton, and on February 19, 1730, he bought another farm of James Lakin, at a place called the "Four Acres" in Groton. Dr. Samuel A. Green, who is authority on the history of Groton, is unable to identify this place. He lived there until April 20, 1741, when he deeded this farm at the "Four Acres" to Samuel Chamberlain, of Chelmsford, a gentleman.

In the meantime his wife's father, Thomas Woods, of Groton, had died and there was trouble in settling the Woods estate. On September 8, 1740, John Chamberlain and Amos Woods, two of the heirs, petitioned the Judge of Probate for Middlesex, to have Samuel Chamberlain, of Chelmsford, a gentleman, appointed administrator. A lawsuit followed. On August 20, 1741, his wife Abigail, sold to this same Samuel Chamberlain of Chelmsford, and Josiah Sartel of Groton, her share in her father's estate, situated on the north side of Brown Loaf Hill. This Samuel Chamberlain, called captain, was, I conjecture, an uncle to Paugus John and the father of Souhegan John, and should be distinguished from Samuel Chamberlain, of Westford, called Lieutenant, a contemporary.

However, John Chamberlain probably owned no real estate after 1741. In June, 1742, his name appears among the inhabitants and residents of the northerly part of Groton (now Pepperell), on a petition to Governor William Shirley.

Of his family I will give but little. On October 13, 1713, the

year he reached his majority, he married Abigail, daughter of Thomas and Abigail Woods, of Groton. To them were born at Groton four daughters and two sons, viz.:

- i. ELIZABETH,⁵ b. 27 Oct., 1714; m. 23 Mch, 1736, Jeremiah, son of Zachariah and Abigail Lawrence. He was b. 7 Dec. 1713, became deacon of First Parish in Pepperell, where he d. 29 Aug., 1759. She d. 1 Feb., 1774, *æ.* 60 years.
- ii. HANNAH,⁵ b. 18 Jan., 1716.
- iii. JOHN, JR.,⁵ b. 24 Mch., 1720; m. 3 Dec., 1746, Rachel, daug. of Zachariah and Abigail Lawrence. She was b. in 1727, and d. 6 Oct., 1756. He served in Capt. J. Shattuck's Co. in 1758 in the French and Indian War, (Green's Groton During Indian Wars, p. 167). Children :
 1. *Rachael*,⁶ b. 10 July, 1747 ; d. 13 Oct. 1756.
 2. *Abigail*,⁶ b. 8 Sept., 1749; m. in Pepperell, 7 June, 1770, Edmond, son of Dr. Benjamin and Dinah (Hunt) Shattuck of Littleton, Mass. He b. 20 July, 1744, removed to Groton, Mass., abt. 1773, where she d. 17 Mch, 1796, *æ.* 47 y. 6 m. 9 d. He was selectman, town clerk, representative, postmaster, justice and removed to Cockermouth, (now Groton), N. H. where he d. in 1816.
 3. *John*,⁶ Jr., b. 27 Feb., 1752.
 4. *Ede*,⁶ b. 9 Oct., 1754.
- iv. SARAH,⁵ b. 27 April, 1727.
- v. ABIGAIL,⁵ b. Jan., 1732.
- vi. THOMAS,⁵ b. 2 Sept., 1735; m. (?) 9 May, 1769, Lydia Adams, of Groton, Mass. Perhaps the Thomas, a cooper, who purchased 160 acres of the Great Farm belonging to Hon. Samuel Waldo's heirs, 28 Jan., 1762, situated in Pepperell (Middlesex Deeds, Liber 60, p. 221).

On March 31, 1756, Jeremiah Lawrence, then of the district of Pepperell, a son-in-law, was appointed "administrator of the estate of John Chamberlain, late of Groton, Husband-man." The last resting-place of this man is unknown; but his service rendered at Pigwacket outlives the skepticism of the ages.

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