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DAVENPORT RIDGE.

STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT.

HISTORICAL SKETCH.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE USE.

A. B. DAVENPORT,

GARFIELD BUILDING, (ROOM 44),

BROOKLYN, N.Y.

1892.



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JOHN JAMES OAKS

1800

DAVENPORT RIDGE.

STAMFORD, CONN.

HISTORICAL.

THE town of Stamford lies in the southwestern part of Connecticut, about thirty-three miles from the city of New York, with which it has almost hourly connection by railroad, and also daily steamboat communication.

The place was settled in 1641 by people who had come from Wethersfield, near Hartford, the previous year, bringing their church organization with them together with their minister, Rev. Richard Denton. This was under the advice of the Rev. John Davenport, who with Theophilus Eaton had come to New Haven in 1638, and were the founders of the New Haven Colony. There were twenty-nine heads of families among the original Stamford settlers, which number, before the end of 1642, was increased to fifty-nine.

In 1640, the New Haven settlers sent one of their men, Nathaniel Turner, to negotiate with the Indians for the purchase of their lands at Rippowams (afterwards Stamford). This was before the coming of the new settlers. A treaty of

purchase was made and duly signed by Ponus Sagamore of Toquams, and Wascussee Sagamore of Shippan, for the purchase of all the lands belonging to both the above-named Sagamores, except a piece of land which the said Ponus reserved for himself and the rest of said Indians to plant on. The price agreed on for the land was twelve coats, twelve hoes, twelve hatchets, twelve glasses, twelve knives, four kettles, and four fathoms of white wampum.

A confirmatory deed was executed in 1655, by said Ponus, and Onax his son, covering all the land north of the home lots of the village to sixteen miles north, and of the width of eight miles, which extended beyond the present limits of Connecticut into what is now Westchester Co., New York, "and the above said Indians, Ponus and Onax, with all other Indians that be concerned in it, have surrendered all the said land to the town of Stamford, as their proper right, forever, and the aforesaid Indians have set their hands as witnessing the truth hereof, and for and in consideration hereof the said town of Stamford is to give the said Indians 4 coats, which the Indians did accept of, for full satisfaction for the aforesaid lands, altho' it was paid before, hereby Ponus' posterity is cut off from making any claim or having any right to any part of the aforesaid land, and do hereby surrender and make over for us or any of ours forever, unto the Englishmen of the town of Stamford and their posterity for-

ever, the land as it is butted and bounded the bounds above-mentioned. The said Ponus, and Onax his son, having this day received of Richard Law 4 coats acknowledging themselves fully satisfied for the aforesaid lands. Witness the said Indians the day and date hereof, Stamford, August 15, 1655.

Ponus. x

Witnesses :

Onax. x

Wm. Newman.

Richard Laws."

The village was located and laid out on a level plain, but the parts of the town adjoining the village are composed of hills and eminences of great beauty, and crowned with fine country seats. Back of these the land lies in ridges, running north and south, such as Long Ridge, High Ridge, Davenport Ridge, &c. Some of these rise to the height of four or five hundred feet above tide water and afford very picturesque views.

The town is bounded on the north by Poundridge and Bedford, and on the south by Long Island Sound. The towns of New Canaan and Darien on the east separate it from Norwalk. The two former were formed from the townships of Stamford and Norwalk. On the west lies the township of Greenwich. The population of the town is about 17,000. Although there are quite a number of large manufactories here it is rather a place of residences for retired merchants and active business men of New York, as well as a

summer resort for health seekers, and those looking for summer rest and recreation. An active business is carried on in the village. Besides the Congregational there are Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Universalist and Roman Catholic churches. A large number of well-to-do farmers are found in the rural districts.

The second minister of the Stamford Church was Rev. John Bishop. After the death of Mr. Denton the fame of this young man had reached the bereaved church, and two of their members were delegated to go to the neighborhood of Boston to see if he could be induced to come and be their minister. They found him, and he accepted their invitation, and accompanied them on foot all the way from Boston, bringing with him under his arm his Bible. Mr. Bishop's ministry continued twenty-eight years. Another Bible found among the first settlers belonged to Lt. Francis Bell, and is still preserved by his descendants. It has an antiquity of nearly three hundred years. It contains a record of the first male child born in Stamford, Jonathan Bell, son of Francis Bell, in September, 1644. From this ancient relic the Scriptures were read at the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of the town, and it will no doubt be brought into similar use at the celebration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary during the present year, 1892.

The third minister was the Rev. John Davenport, the grandson of Rev. John Davenport, a

famous clergyman of London, who was born in the ancient city of Coventry, England, in 1597, and who came with a colony of emigrants to New Haven in 1638.

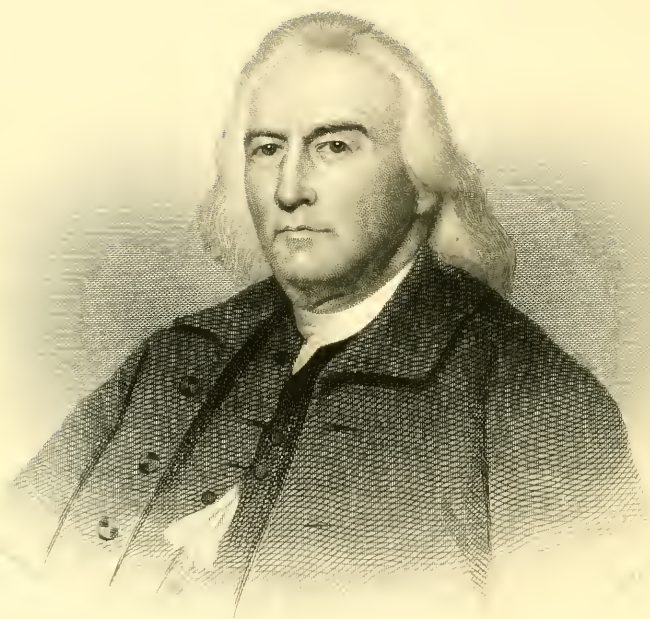
Mr. Davenport was settled over the Stamford Church in 1693, and died in 1731. He was a man of commanding influence throughout the State and a member of the corporation of Yale College. He died in 1731. He had been greatly enriched by lands inherited from his grandfather in New Haven, and gained by gift or purchase in Stamford.

His third son was Colonel Abraham Davenport, of whom Dr. Dwight, in his *Travels*, Vol. III., p. 477, gives the following account :

" In this town [Stamford], lived the Hon. Abraham Davenport, for a long time one of the Councillors of the State, and before that, of the Colony of Connecticut. This gentleman was the son of the Rev. John Davenport, and the great-grandson of the Rev. John Davenport, the father of the New Haven Colony. Colonel Davenport was possessed of a vigorous understanding and invincible firmness of mind of; integrity and justice, unquestioned even by his enemies; of veracity exact in a degree, nearly singular; and of a weight of character which for many years decided in this County almost every question to which it was lent. He was early a professor of the Christian religion; and adorned its doctrines by an ex-

exemplary conformity to its precepts. He was often styled a rough diamond ; and the appellation was, perhaps, never given with more propriety. His virtues were all of the masculine kind : less soft, graceful and alluring, than his friends wished ; but more extensively productive of real good to mankind, than those of almost any man who has been distinguished for gentleness of character. It would be happy for this or any other country, if the magistrate should execute its laws with the exactness for which he was distinguished. Colonel Davenport acquired property with diligence, and preserved it with frugality ; and hence was by many persons supposed to regard it with an improper attachment. This, however, was a very erroneous opinion. Of what was merely ornamental, he was, I think, too regardless ; but the poor found nowhere a more liberal benefactor, nor the stranger a more hospitable host. I say this from personal knowledge, acquired by a long continued and intimate acquaintance with him and his family. While the war had its principal seat in the State of New York, he took the entire superintendence of the sick soldiers who were returning home ; filled his own houses with them ; and devoted to their relief his own time, and that of his family ; while he provided elsewhere the best accommodations for such as he could not receive. In a season when an expectation of approaching scarcity had raised the price of bread-corn to an enormous height, he not only





Abr^m Davenport

sold the produce of his own farms to the poor at the former customary price, but bought corn extensively, and sold this also, as he had sold his own. His alms were at the same time rarely rivalled in their extent.

“One instance of Colonel Davenport’s firmness deserves to be mentioned. The 19th of May, 1780, was a remarkably dark day. Candles were lighted in many houses; the birds were silent and disappeared; the fowls retired to roost. The Legislature of Connecticut was then in session at Hartford. A very general opinion prevailed that the day of Judgment was at hand. The House of Representatives being unable to transact their business, adjourned. A proposal to adjourn the Council was under consideration. When the opinion of Colonel Davenport was asked, he answered, ‘I am against an adjournment. The day of Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment: if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.’”

This incident, so characteristic of this noble man, has been pleasingly rendered in verse by John Greenleaf Whittier, and is copied, by his permission, from “The Tent on the Beach,” pp. 98-102 :

ABRAHAM DAVENPORT.

In the old days (a custom laid aside
 With breeches and cocked hats) the people sent
 Their wisest men to make the public laws.
 And so from a brown homestead, where the Sound
 Drinks the small tribute of the Mianas,
 Waved over by the woods of Rippowams,
 And hallowed by pure lives and tranquil deaths,
 Stamford sent up to the councils of the State
 Wisdom and grace in Abraham Davenport.

'Twas on a May-day of the far old year
 Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell
 Over the bloom and sweet life of the Spring,
 Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon,
 A horror of great darkness, like the night
 In day of which the Norland sagas tell,—
 The Twilight of the Gods. The low-hung sky
 Was black with ominous clouds, save where its rim
 Was fringed with a dull glow, like that which
 climbs
 The crater's sides from the red hell below.
 Birds ceased to sing, and all the barn-yard fowls
 Roosted ; the cattle at the pasture bars
 Lowed, and looked homeward ; bats on leathern
 wings
 Flitted abroad ; the sounds of labor died ;
 Men prayed, and women wept ; all ears grew
 sharp
 To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet shatter

The black sky, that the dreadful face of Christ
Might look from the rent-clouds, not as he looked
A loving guest at Bethany, but stern
As Justice and inexorable Law.

Meanwhile in the old State-House, dim as
ghosts,
Sat the lawgivers of Connecticut,
Trembling beneath their legislative robes.
“It is the Lord’s Great Day ! Let us adjourn.”
Some said ; and then, as if with one accord,
All eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport.
He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice
The intolerable hush. “This well may be
The Day of Judgment which the world awaits :
But be it so or not, I only know
My present duty, and my Lord’s command
To occupy till he come. So at the post
Where he hath set me in his providence,
I choose, for one, to meet him face to face.—
No faithless servant frightened from my task.
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls ;
And therefore, with all reverence, I would say,
Let God do his work, we will see to ours,
Bring in the candles.” And they brought them in.

Then by the flaring lights the Speaker read,
Albeit with husky voice and shaking hands,
An act to amend an act to regulate
The shad and alewife fisheries. Whereupon
Wisely and well spake Abraham Davenport,
Straight to the question, with no figures of speech

Save the ten Arab signs, yet not without
 The shrewd dry humor natural to the man :
 His awe-struck colleagues listening all the while,
 Between the pauses of his argument,
 To hear the thunder of the wrath of God
 Break from the hollow trumpet of the cloud.

And there he stands in memory to this day,
 Erect, self-poised, a rugged face, half seen
 Against the background of unnatural dark,
 A witness to the ages as they pass,
 That simple duty hath no place for fear.

The eldest son of the Stamford minister was John Davenport, born January 2d, 1698, and married by his father to Sarah Bishop, September 6th, 1722. He moved to what was then, and is still, known by the name of "DAVENPORT RIDGE," a beautiful Pisgah site about five miles north by east from what is now the centre of Stamford village, upon lands conveyed to him by the will of his father. This will was dated January 20, 1729.

"Item.—I give and bequeath to my loving and eldest son, John, two parts of said equal parts of my dividable estate, and over and above that I give said son the sum of thirty-one pounds and ten shillings. Also my mind is that said John have my land on Davenport Ridge so called, as may appear by the note of laying out and seized to me, signed by Deacon Samuel Hoyt [Hoyt], Stephen Bishop and John Holly, and extending



Davenport Ridge.—1885.
Country seat of A. B. DAVENPORT,
Stamford, Conn.

to Ponasses Path (now called Ponus Street), and the house and barn thereon ; further, my meaning is that the said house and barn be appraised according to their value at the said time of appraising, only I would have all my land improved by my son John, by the plough or for pasture, and inclosed, to be to my said son John, to him, his heirs and assigns forever."

In Huntington's History of Stamford, appears the following account of this site, pp. 481-2.

"This structure occupies a most commanding view from the west slope of Davenport Ridge. It is about five miles, north by east, from the Stamford Depot. The panorama stretching around it is, at any season of the year, well worth a study, and in summer is very beautiful.

"This locality was voted to the Rev. John Davenport, of Stamford, by the proprietors of the town, in January, 1705-6, in consideration of his hundred pounds interest in the 'Long Lots,' as agreed upon at the time of his settlement here in 1693. By his will, January 20, 1728, he gave it to his eldest son, John, who occupied the house upon it, and died there in 1742. He was one of the original members of the Congregational Church, formed in the parish of Canaan by members from the Norwalk and Stamford churches, June, 1733. The township of New Canaan was not organized till 1802. The property passed next into the hands of the third John, who died in 1756, leaving it to the fourth John, a deacon in the North Stam-

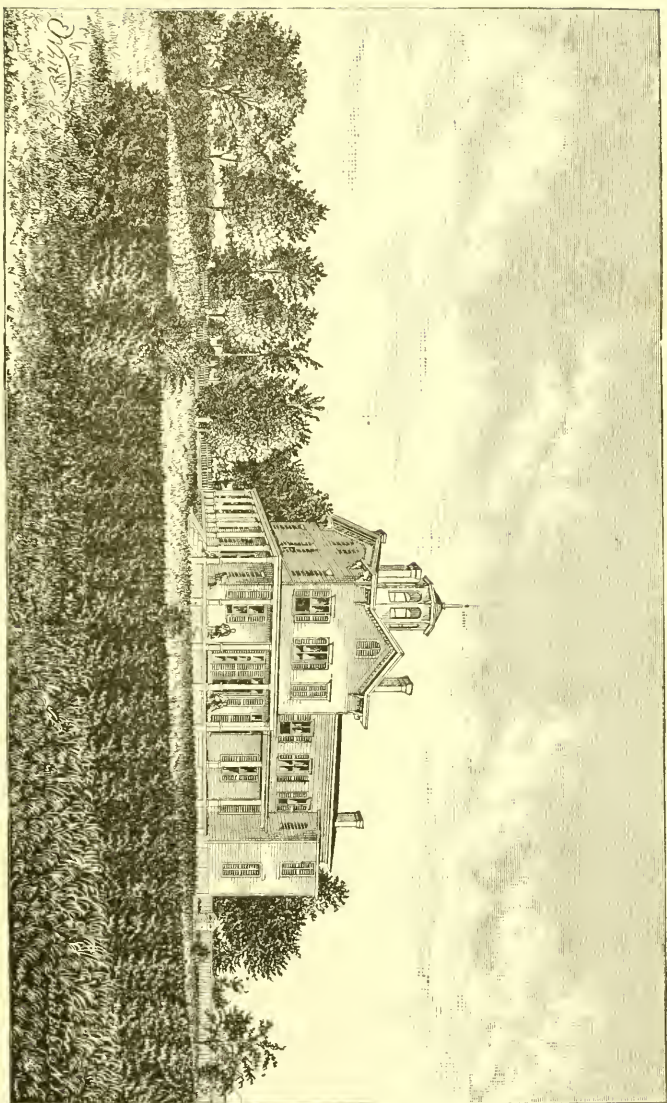
ford Church, who died in 1842. A portion of the land was bought of the heirs by Amzi B. Davenport, a grandson of this deacon John, and on it he built the residence represented in our cut. It occupies the site of an old residence removed about eighty years ago." A few rods to the north-east stands the dwelling formerly occupied by his grandfather, who erected it with his own hands in 1775. Davenport Ridge has an elevation of about 400 feet above tide-water, with a view of Long Island Sound for a distance of forty miles. From this point are seen the spires and turrets of fifteen churches, in the towns of Stamford, Greenwich, New Canaan, Weston, Greenfield Hill, with the shores of Long Island on the south, and the hills of Westchester County, N.Y., on the north.

The present mansion was erected in 1863-5. It contains twenty rooms, viz.: one large parlor, one large sitting room, a small bedroom, library, (extending two stories), dining room, kitchen, laundry, and milk room; second story, eight sleeping rooms and bath room, and three bedrooms in the attic.

The "Old Homestead" contains ten rooms, and is in a condition to last fifty years longer.

There are three barns upon the place, with stable and carriage houses, also four wells of good water. Distance from railroad station, New Canaan, three miles, Springdale, two and a half miles, and Stamford, five miles.

It is a rare occurrence that land secured from



DAVENTPORT RIDGE-STANFORD, CONN.

THE SUMMER RESIDENCE OF A. BENEDICT DAVENPORT.

(REAR VIEW.)

the Indians by the first settlers of a town, and conveyed by them to a single individual, should have remained in that family without alienation for nearly two hundred years. Six generations have successively owned this native seat.

DAVENPORT RIDGE.

On sunset ridge my lady sleeps.
 As nightly sweeps
 The shadow-throng from out the east,
 All hushing—man and bird and beast—
 And stars of night
 Begin to light
 The gems of that far canopy,
 The great, blue, upper-world of sky,
 I think their million rays have wrought
 Some secret entrance to her thought,
 And through it shining,
 Each night refining,
 Make her so like the light that doth endure,
 So fresh, so dear, so bright, so true, so pure!
 Even as the heavens seem to gently bend
 These homestead acres to their skyey trend,
 Curving the fields up to a swelling dome,
 Lifting to Eden-views the human home,
 So, too, that vault of blue
 Invites and moulds more true,
 Like to itself, as if it were a part,
 Her own unchanging, strong, transparent heart.

On sunset ridge there shines a light.
 In day or night
 I shall not look for it in vain ;
 Love's beacon braves the wind and rain,

Nor is there dark
 Can dim that mark
 To one storm-driven, homeward bark.
 How love can beautify the ground !
 Or make the solemn heavens around,
 Or hills, or trees, or murmuring sea,
 All seem a part of home, of thee !
 The sweet, good mother,
 And sire, and brother,
 And she the friend and sister, sister-friend,
 All borrow from the light that thou dost lend.

O long and often may their footsteps tend
 Up to those fields where precious memories sleep,
 Up to those halls where sons and daughters keep
 Old faith, old love, old hope in man's career,
 Like old wine, in stout hearts, for others' cheer !
 Long may the hill-top light salute the town
 With bright reminder of its old renown !
 Long may its sons and daughters sleep and wake
 While beauteous suns shall daily set or break
 On sunset ridge.

To M. V. D.

C. H. C.

(Ponus Street, Oct., 1891).



DAVENPORT RIDGE.

STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT.

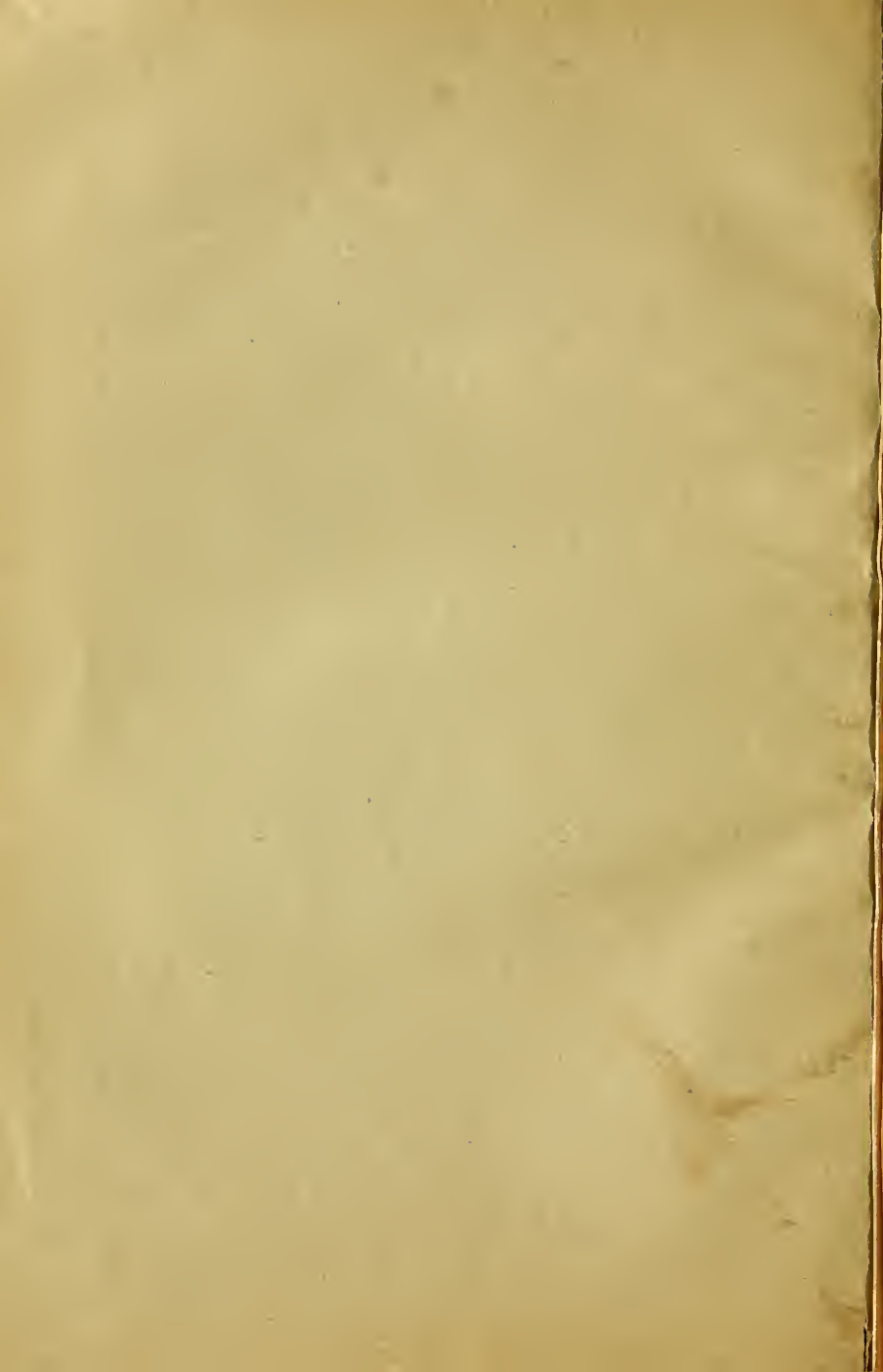
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