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Book 7954









LUCY KEYES,

THE LOST CHILD OF

WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN.









WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN.—From the East.

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LUCY KEYES,

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THE LOST CHILD OF

WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN.

By FRANCIS E. <sup>Event</sup>BLAKE.

BOSTON :  
PRESS OF DAVID CLAPP & SON.  
1893.

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## PREFATORY.

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IN most of our New England towns the historian finds some traditions or legends which have been handed down from one generation to another until they form a part of the history of the town. They may relate to Indian invasions or other events of war, to exhibitions of bravery, to instances of suffering, or hardship, or even to personal peculiarities of some of its citizens. Some of them may be based upon truth and yet contain much error, and others may have no foundation whatever.

The town of Princeton has its share of such traditions, among which the most familiar is the story of Lucy Keyes the "lost child." How often has this story been told, and how many speculations have been made as to her fate! Many of the old people of to-day vividly remember sitting by the fireside and listening to the story which was ever fresh and thrilling. It has not only moved children to tears, but has awakened in older persons a tender interest in the mysterious fate of the child. Visitors to the town are shown the spot where the child lived, and again the story is rehearsed with more or less correctness in detail. Yet, notwithstanding it has been so often repeated, the writer, in view of certain facts he has discovered, has deemed it well to relate it again, in order that the truth may be made known, and as far as possible at this late day the character of one unjustly charged with crime may be vindicated.



## LUCY KEYES.

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ROBERT KEYES was born in Chelmsford, Mass., September 21, 1711, and when a young man removed to Shrewsbury, where December 24, 1740, he married Martha Bowker. They lived in Shrewsbury some ten or twelve years. On the 13th of June, 1749, he bought of his townsman Benjamin Muzzey, for £400 "old tenor," a tract of two hundred acres on the easterly side of Wachusett Mountain, which had been granted Mr. Muzzey by the General Court, on account of the losses and suffering sustained by him while held in captivity by the Indians, he having been a soldier of the Province at the time of his capture. In October, 1750, Mr. Keyes sold his house in Shrewsbury, and the following May removed with his family to his new home on the mountain side. At this time there were but three or four families living in the whole territory now embraced within the bounds of Princeton, and they living widely apart, although it is probable that a few stray individuals without families were living in isolated places in the district.

Thus Mr. Keyes and his family were practically alone in their mountain home, his farm being surrounded by *unappropriated* and *unoccupied* lands. His nearest neighbor on the south was probably Abijah Moore, who had a tavern on what is now called the Sterling Road, near "Russell's Corner." On the north it is possible the Willards or the Goddards had begun to build their sawmill, while on the southeast, four miles away on the "old Houghton place," was the "Wilder tavern" for the accommodation of travelers to Nichewaug, the same road upon which, one mile farther north, Mr. Moore, above referred to, kept his place of "entertainment for man and beast."

In Rutland "East Wing" there may have been one or two families, but they were miles away from Mr. Keyes. In Westminster, four miles distant, there were probably two hundred and twenty five inhabitants in 1751, but there was no settlement which could be called a village, and the same can be said of Barre fifteen miles south west, and of Hubbardston on the west. Southeasterly, seventeen miles away, lay the old town of Shrewsbury, Mr. Keyes' former home, while Rutland town was ten miles to the west, and Lancaster, probably the nearest settlement of any size, was twelve miles distant on the east. Rutland "East Wing," with the "farms adjoining on the north," which included Mr. Keyes', were incorporated as the *District of Princetown* October 24, 1759, and as the *Town of Princeton* April 24, 1771.

Although no record furnishes evidence of any road near Mr. Keyes' farm, yet there was no doubt one following the old Indian path, and perhaps identical with the present Westminster road, connecting the road on which Mr. Moore's tavern was located with the older traveled road towards the west which passed by Wachusett Pond to some of the interior towns.

Mr. Keyes was by trade a blacksmith, but one cannot readily conceive at the time of his settlement, or for many years afterwards, any demand for his services in that locality, except for his own personal needs. Miles from any village and away from the traveled roads, and even those roads used so little, we can understand that he was forced to lay aside his accustomed trade and give attention to clearing the land and tilling the soil. The wildness of the country, abounding in large areas of woodland, afforded him, also, facilities for exercising his skill as a huntsman, for which he was famous.

*Robert Keyes*

Mr. Keyes had ten children, of whom five were born in Shrewsbury, or at least before the parents settled at Wachusett. The principal event which has brought this family into notice occurred



on Monday, the 14th of April, 1755. On that day his daughter Lucy, four years and eight months old, wandered away from home, and was never seen again by the family. It was at first surmised that the child lost her way in the woods while attempting to follow her elder sisters Patty and Anna, aged nine and seven years respectively, who had gone to Wachusett Pond, a mile away, perhaps as some have stated to get some sand for household purposes. As stated before, there were near Mr. Keyes only a few paths following the Indian trails, or such paths as he himself had marked through the woods, and a child of the age of Lucy could easily have wandered away and been lost.

Disregarding tradition and the additions to the original story that would naturally be made, as it was reported from one to another year after year, we may well accept as correct the statement published in Whitney's History of Worcester County in 1793, at which time the father and the sisters named above were still living; and it may be reasonably believed that this statement was obtained directly from the family:—

“It was in the month of May in the year 1751, when Mr. Robert Keyes, now living, removed with his family from Shrewsbury, and fixed down near the foot of Watchusett hill, on the east side, being the fourth family which settled in the place. Upon the 14th of April, 1755, a child of his, named Lucy, aged four years and eight months, attempting, as was supposed, to follow her sisters, who had gone to Watchusett Pond, about a mile distant, and having nothing but marked trees to guide her, wandered out of her way in the woods, and was never heard of afterwards. The people for nearly thirty miles around collected immediately, and in companies traversed the woods, day after day and week after week, searching for her, but never made the least discovery. Many journeys were taken by the father, in consequence of reports, but all in vain. Various were and have been the conjectures of people respecting the fate of the child. Divers concurring circumstances render the following most probable, that she was taken by the Indians, and carried into their country, and soon forgot her relations, lost her native language, and became as one of the aborigines.”

The grief of the mother was exceedingly great. She mourned for the loss of this her dearest child and watched daily for her return, often going out into the woods and calling her by name

with the wild hope of hearing a response. As the days passed and the child did not appear, the sense of loneliness and loss became almost unbearable and her reason nearly forsook her. Even at the time of her death more than thirty years after, she had not recovered from the effects of the bereavement.\* The loss of the child created a great excitement as the news spread about and reached the neighboring settlements, and plans were quickly made to commence a search. The old neighbors of Mr. Keyes in Shrewsbury, seventeen miles distant, came up to help; Lancaster, twelve miles east, sent its contingent, while Rutland and other towns contributed their share of volunteers. Notwithstanding the lack of regular means of conveying the intelligence, the news spread quickly, and a very large number of men were assembled together, the pond was dragged, and for many days a systematic search was carried on, even long after all effort seemed likely to be fruitless. Naturally the failure of the long search strengthened the suspicions to which Mr. Whitney alludes in his account, that the child was stolen by the Indians.

The father, clinging to this theory, used every exertion to get some trace of the child, following eagerly every possible clue, but often misled by false reports. The means of communication were imperfect, and the expenses of traveling were large, especially for one in his condition of life, but nevertheless he appears to have spared no efforts within his power to find the child.

Ten years after the event, feeling almost impoverished by the large expenditures he had been obliged to make in the search for the child, he petitioned the General Court of the Province, hoping to receive some measure of relief. In this petition he briefly tells the story of his efforts in behalf of his child.

\* "The mother was brought to the verge of insanity by the loss of her little girl, and for a long time after her disappearance she always went out at night-fall and called, Lu-cy! but the echo from the aged forests was the only answer." *Notes of Prof. Everett.*

"The conjectures as to its fate were various, the most prevalent being that it was carried off by a straggling party of Indians on a visit to the mountain. This was made more probable by the story of two men, who went some years after this occurrence from Groton, on a trading expedition among the Indians on Canada line. They related, on their return, that they found living among the Indians a white woman, who knew nothing farther of her birth or parentage, than that she once lived near 'Chusett Hill.'"—*Russell's History of Princeton.*

“ Province of the }  
 Massachusetts Bay }

To his Excellency Francis Barnard Esq<sup>r</sup>. Captain General and Governor in Chief in & over said Province the Honourable his Majestys Council & house of Representatives in General Court assembled May 29th, 1765.

Humbly shews Robert Keyes of Princetown in y<sup>e</sup> County of Worcester that in y<sup>e</sup> year Seventeen hundred & fifty five he lost one of his Children & was Supposed to be taken by the Indians & Carried to Canada when it was first lost it was apprehended to be in the woods wandring about & your Petitioner was at great Cost & trouble In Searching the woods for it but to no good purpose; after this he hears It was at Canada and that he could get further Information thereof at Porchmouth In New-Hampshire on hearing that He went there and also sent to Canada. afwards (*sic*) He advertised said Child In the New York papers; \* he had an account of Such a Child's being among the Mohawks and determined to go after his Child the last fall but has heitherto been prevented by reason of Sickness & deaths in his family. And the Cost he hath been at In Searching for s<sup>d</sup> Child is so Great being about one hundred pounds lawful money, that he is not able to bear it being in a new plantation, and as their is within Sixty rods of his door some Province land laying on y<sup>e</sup> Watchusett Hill which would be some advantage to him provided he could have it. Therefore your Petit<sup>r</sup> humbly prays the Hono<sup>ble</sup> Court to take his Case In your Compationate Consideration & make him a grant of y<sup>e</sup> Easterly half of said Watchusett hill & your Pet as in duty bound will ever pray.

ROBERT KEYES.

For reasons which do not appear this petition was rejected, and Mr. Keyes was thrown back upon his old resources for the support of his family. He had sold in 1759 a part of his farm, the proceeds of which were doubtless used in meeting the expenses of the search for the missing girl. But his farm could yield him only a little ready money for this purpose. In 1767 he sold to his son in law Samuel Mossman, 4½ acres of the farm; in 1770, 42 acres to William Dodd, and in 1773, 40 acres to his son Jonas, leaving but about 50 acres for himself.

Mrs. Keyes died August 9, 1789, and her husband March 1, 1795. Both were probably buried in the old graveyard on Meeting House Hill, but the gravestone of the wife alone remains.

\* The writer has examined the New York papers from 1755 to 1764, but failed to find this advertisement.

This simple story of the loss of the child and the search made for her was told by one to another, and rehearsed by parents to their children, and would have gone down through the generations unchanged but for an incident which occurred at the Centennial celebration of Princeton in 1859. The poet of the day, Prof. Erastus Everett of Brooklyn, N. Y., having made reference in his poem to the loss of the child, was subsequently shown a letter written in 1827 by a native of Princeton, which placed the matter in an entirely different light. Interested in the new developments, he, by correspondence, succeeded in finding the writer of the letter, who confirmed the statements previously made, and the substance of her narrative with some comments by Mr. Everett were printed with the proceedings of the Centennial.

The letter of 1827 I have never been able to find, although I have made diligent inquiry for it, and in fact I have not learned of any one who remembers it, except Mr. Everett, who only recalls the fact that at the time he saw it, it was in a dilapidated condition, but he does not remember who handed it to him, or what became of it. Through the courtesy of Mr. Everett, however, I have a copy of the second letter, which is given in full:—

Rockford, Bourbon Co., Kansas Territory,  
December 8, 1859.

“ERASTUS EVERETT, Esq.,

Dear Sir:—A letter of inquiry, dated at Brooklyn, with your signature, after being re-mailed at different points, reached me quite recently, and I hasten to reply. To give publicity to the confession of a crime, with mere supposition for its basis, demands an abler pen than mine, while to stigmatize the dead or give unnecessary pain to the living betrays a character more abandoned than I wish to possess. You say the account given in a letter of 1827 to my sister, Mrs. Hager (which I supposed had been given to the winds or the flames long ago), was to you “A mystery, that is incomprehensible.” Perhaps the organ of marvellousness is more fully developed in my head than in yours. Be that as it may, I believe the circumstances, as narrated to me in 1827, to be authentic; nor have I heard anything since by which I have doubted their authenticity. I gave more credence to the report from the fact that all the years of my girlhood were spent within half a mile of Mrs. John Gleason of Princeton, whose name pre-

vious to her marriage was Patty Keyes, sister to the child "Lucy," and one of the "Two sisters who went to the pond for sand"; and I have many times listened as she related the sad story of the child's disappearance, together with other incidents that in my opinion corroborated the truth of Mrs. Anderson's statement. Mrs. Anderson, of Deerfield, N. Y., witnessed the confession, told it to Mrs. Whitmore and she gave it to me. Mrs. Whitmore has been dead more than thirty years. Mrs. Anderson I never saw, and whether she is still living I do not know.

The name of the man, to whom allusion is made, was Littlejohn. His first name, his age, and the precise time at which he died, I disremember, if I ever heard. I cannot recollect how, or what I wrote in 1827, but probably some things were mentioned at that time fresh in my mind that the lapse of thirty-two years have effaced from my memory. However, the main points I recollect distinctly and will give them. I was told that Mr. Littlejohn was thought to be dying for three days—at length he arose in bed and speaking audibly, said he could not die until he had confessed a murder that he committed many years before—said he was formerly a neighbor to Robert Keyes of Princeton, Mass., there was misunderstanding between the families. Mr. and Mrs. Keyes felt unpleasantly to live thus and went to Mr. L's to effect, if possible, a reconciliation, which having been apparently accomplished and mutual pledges of renewed friendship exchanged they (Mr. K. and wife) returned home. But the enmity of Mr. L. had not subsided. He sought revenge, and afterward seeing their little daughter alone in the woods, to avenge himself on the parents, killed her by beating her head against a log, and then placed her body in a hollow log, and went to his house. When the neighbors were solicited to assist in searching for the lost, he was among the first, and being familiar with the forest, he volunteered to lead the party, carefully avoiding the hollow log till night. After dark he went to the hollow log, took the body and deposited it in a hole, which had been made by the overturning of a tree.

The log had been cut from the stump, leaving only it and the roots, which he turned back in its former position and thought all safe. He said, the next day as a party were passing the hollow log, they found a lock of hair, which the family identified as that of Lucy's and he knew it to be hers, for as he was taking the body in the dark her hair caught and in his hurry he left this lock. After the search was given up as fruitless, he felt ill at ease there and sometime after left the town. He gave the locality of the stump, the particular kind of wood of which the tree was once composed, and requested some one present to write his confession

to Princeton, adding that he believed that the stump might then be in existence and, by digging, the bones of the child might be found.

This appeared more incredulous to me at that time than anything else, and I may have omitted to write it then, but as you have particularly requested so, I have given you all the particulars in my possession at this late day.

Mrs. Anderson came to Eaton, N. Y., where Mrs. Whitmore resided, met her at the house of a friend, and learning that Mrs. W. was a native of Princeton, gave her the relation above and Mrs. W. requested me to write. Now, Sir, as you seem interested in the matter, and as doubt is implied respecting the truthfulness of the confession, allow me to suggest the propriety of ascertaining through some persons at Deerfield, where I think Mr. Littlejohn died, the time of his demise and the facts of his confession.

You say "The substance of my letter will be embodied in a record that the people of Princeton will read." I wish you had been more explicit. I am a Yankee, Sir, and you know the Yankees are proverbial for natural curiosity. Am I to understand that a work is to be published, or is it merely to be placed upon the records of the town? If the former is the case, I hope I may be apprised of it, for whatever may interest Princeton folks will interest your humble friend in southern Kansas. Even the name of Princeton falls pleasantly on my ear.

" I love her rocks and hills,  
Her meadows, plains and fields  
And healthful air:  
And though far off I dwell,  
My heart shall ever swell,  
Her name to hear."

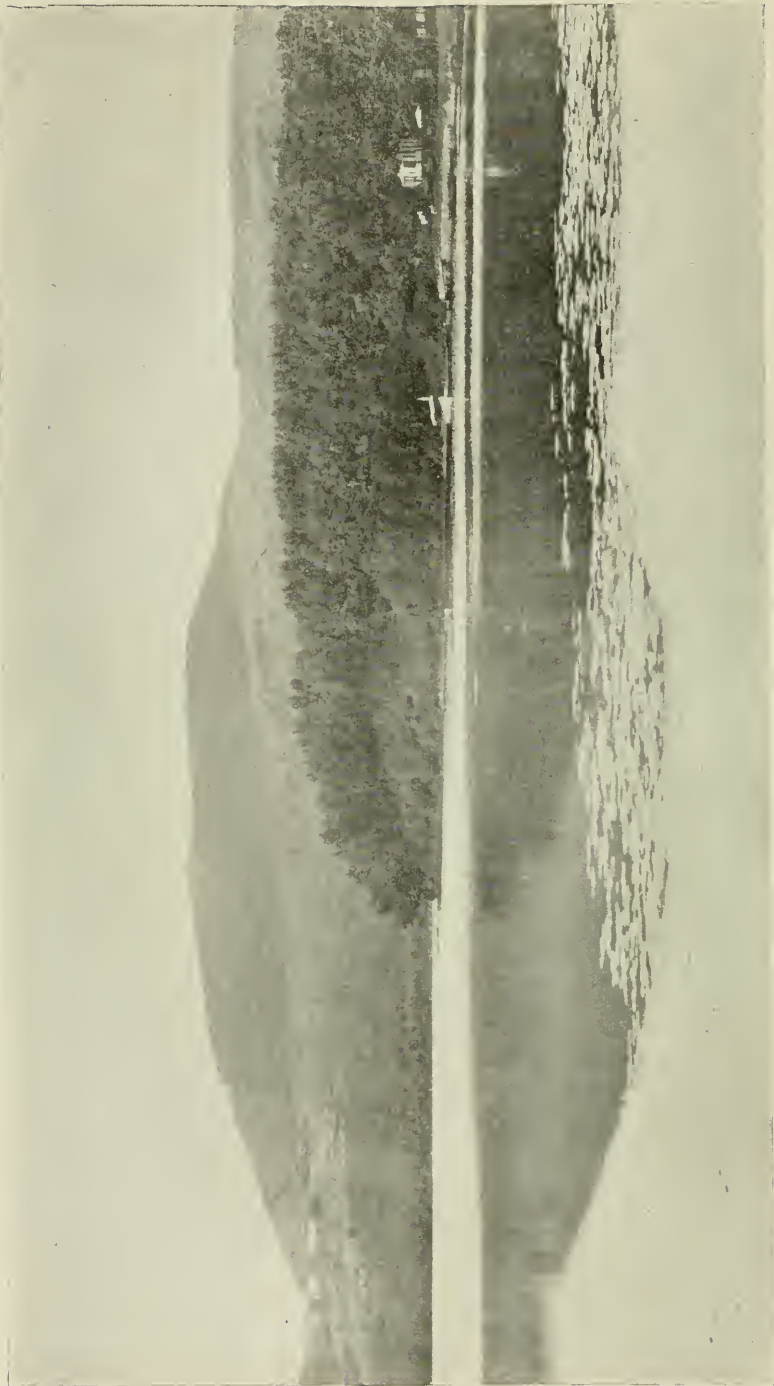
The length and errors of this letter call for an apology, but I dislike apologies and will forbear.

Most Respectfully Yours,

CORNELIA B. K. BROWN.

This letter, which gives us such minute details of the confession, appears to afford convincing proof of the fate of the child, silencing all other conjectures, and without conflicting evidence would apparently settle the question in the minds of the majority of readers. Could the first letter be found it might be seen that there were some variations between the statements of 1827 and 1859, and some points might be more clearly defined, or new





WACHUSETT MOUNTAIN AND THE LAKE.—From the North.



impressions gained in view of what is now known, but in its absence we have nothing to rely upon but that of the later date.

These statements, so far as known to me, were not contradicted, and they became more firmly fixed in the minds of those familiar with the original story, and interested many to whom the whole was new, by means of an article contributed by William T. Harlow, Esq., to the "Old and New Magazine" in 1874. Mr. Harlow made a very interesting and romantic story of the loss of the child and the subsequent confession of the murderer, in which he included statements which he had heard from the lips of his mother, who remembered some who joined in the search for the child. To adapt the story to interest magazine readers he apparently drew upon his imagination, as some of the statements unfortunately will not bear the results of close investigation. In 1884, A. P. Marble, Esq., read before the Worcester Society of Antiquity a paper upon the same subject, which was published in the "New England Magazine" in 1886. The statements already printed formed the basis of his sketch, but his attempt to make a readable romance led him still farther than Mr. Harlow to enlarge upon the facts and to introduce much fiction that the casual reader will accept as truth. Reference to the loss of the child may also be found in the *Keys Genealogy*, 1880, and in the *Worcester County History*, 1879.

After many perusals of this story in the varied forms in which it appeared, I felt a desire to look into the matter and to make clear some points which seemed to me to need explanation. I therefore commenced a thorough investigation, only to be surprised at almost every turn I made.

I have been informed that Mrs. Brown, now deceased, whose letter furnished this strange story, was a woman of marked intelligence, of integrity and personal worth. She stood so high in the estimation of her acquaintances that it is impossible to do otherwise than believe that, *as far as she was concerned*, her statement was correct. Certainly the whole tenor of her letter gives evidence of intellectual ability, as well as an earnest desire to state only that which she believed to be true. Of Mrs. Anderson I can find no trace in Deerfield, N. Y., or its vicinity, although I

have made inquiries personally and corresponded in many directions. The children of Mrs. Whitmore, now living, can give me no information upon the subject, and the children of Mrs. Brown appear to have no papers or facts which add to the statement of their mother. The whole story of the alleged confession stands, then, upon the statement made by Mrs. Brown, which she declared she had received from her sister Mrs. Whitmore, who had heard it from the lips of Mrs. Anderson, to whom the murderer confessed. Thus passing through the minds of three individuals, it would not be strange if there were some mistakes, and if the imagination was drawn upon for some of the details. One naturally receives the impression that the first letter of Mrs. Brown (1827) was written at or near the time of the alleged confession, but a careful scrutiny of the second letter fails to determine that point.

The results of my investigations were presented briefly in a paper read before the Worcester Society of Antiquity in 1891, and published in its proceedings for that year. As the only basis of the story of the confession is the letter of Mrs. Brown's, in endeavoring to establish the truth, that must pass under criticism, and I must confine myself almost entirely to her statement, although I may refer incidentally to the statements of Mr. Harlow and Mr. Marble, but neither of these writers had any information about the confession except as published by Mr. Everett in 1859.

Of the man charged with the crime we know something, and although not so much as we may wish, yet it is more than it might at first be supposed could be learned about one living a quiet life in a thinly settled community so many years ago.

Mrs. Brown refers in her letter to *Mr.* Littlejohn, Mr. Harlow in his sketch to *John* Littlejohn (which I believe he acknowledges to be an error) and Mr. Marble to *Tilly* Littlejohn. As the latter was, so far as can be learned by private or public records or by tradition, the only man bearing the name of Littlejohn who lived in Princeton, and he was once a neighbor of Mr. Keyes, and is regarded by Princeton people as the man concerned in this tragedy, we assume that *he* is the one alone whose character has been brought out so prominently in connection with Lucy Keyes.

TILLY LITTLEJOHN was the son of Thomas\* and Mary Littlejohn, and was born in Lancaster in 1735. After the death of the father, who was killed at Louisburg when Tilly was about ten years old, the mother and the children appear to have continued their residence in Lancaster or Bolton for some years. On the 23d of April, 1755, at which time he appears to have been in the service (probably an apprentice) of Jonathan Wilder, Tilly enlisted in the company of Capt. Asa Whitcomb, and marched one hundred and sixty-five miles to Albany on the expedition to Crown Point. This company was in the "bloody morning fight," but Tilly escaped without injury, and after a service of six months was discharged on the 25th of October.

The roll of Capt. Whitcomb shows that Mr. Littlejohn received for his services of twenty weeks and four days £8. 17/2, allowance for mileage being made of 1s. 6d. per day of fifteen miles travel. Under the head of "names of Fathers and Masters of Sons under Age and Servants" appears the name of Jonathan Wilder against that of Littlejohn, indicating that the latter was an apprentice at that time.

On the 1st of December, 1757, he married Hannah Brooks, in Lancaster.

\* Thomas Littlejohn the father of Tilly is said to have come to this country from Scotland and soon after went to Lancaster, where he is found as early as 1725, when he enlisted in the service of the Province in Capt. Blanchard's company. On the 17th of January 1726-27 he married Mary Butler, and they had five children, four of them recorded at Lancaster.

MARY, May 10, 1728, died Dec. 14, 1748.

THOMAS, July 27, 1730.

SARAH, ———, died 1817, in Bolton.

SIMEON.

TILLY, May 26, 1735.

During the French War Mr. Littlejohn again enlisted in his Majesty's service, and was among those who in 1745 was killed at Louisburg. His widow Mary died in Bolton in 1768, leaving quite a little property. By her will she gave to her sons Thomas, Simeon and Tilly five shillings each ("which is all I give them") and the balance of her estate to her daughter Sarah. Tilly was appointed executor, but he declined to serve.

Thomas, Jr. went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, thence to the neighborhood of Portland, Me., where he died leaving a large number of descendants.

Simeon, according to the statements received from his brother Thomas, settled in one of the southern states, but I have not been able to learn if he had a family.

The descendants of Tilly are scattered throughout the United States, some of them occupying positions of honor and trust.

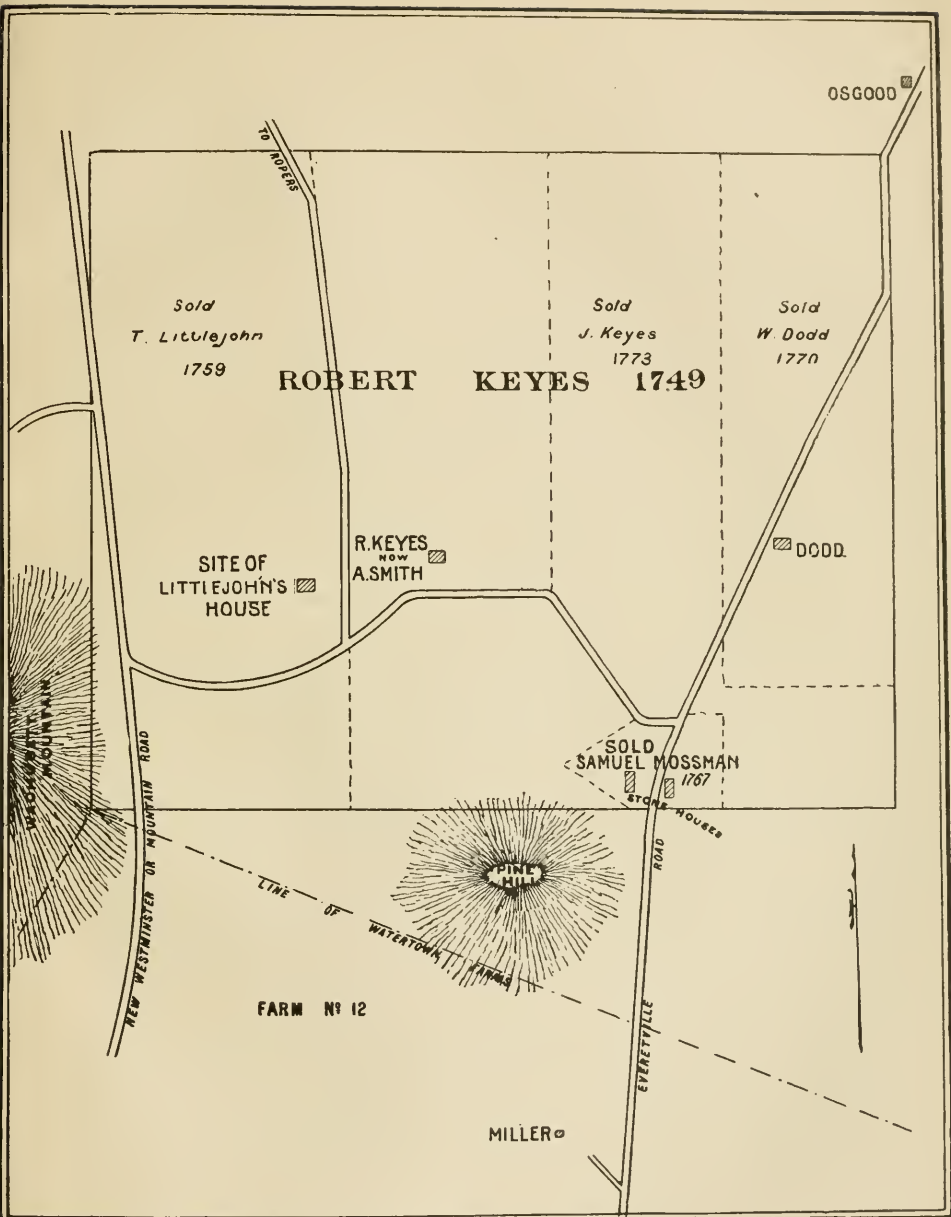
At what time he removed to Princeton I cannot definitely state, but he purchased from Mr. Keyes, for £27, a portion of his farm on the easterly side of the mountain, by deed dated January 22, 1759, at which time he may have been living in that vicinity, although he is simply described as of the "same county and province" as the grantor.\* It may be reasonably inferred that he was there in the fall of 1758, as the birth of his son Levi on the 2d of October of that year is not recorded in Lancaster, but does appear upon the Princeton records, although the entry was not made at the time, as the District records were not commenced until October, 1759. It is not unusual, however, to find at Princeton the records of births which occurred in other towns.

The tract which Mr. Littlejohn purchased was  $67\frac{1}{2}$  acres (almost one-third of the whole) on the westerly side, and Mr. Keyes reserved a right to "pass and re-pass" by "an open road to Watchusett Hill at the usual place of going up said Hill," while Mr. Littlejohn had also a right to pass through Mr. Keyes' land to "ye eastward." The accompanying sketch shows the approximate location of the whole tract with the present roads indicated thereon. The location of Mr. Littlejohn's house is supposed to have been on the easterly side of his farm, near the road now known as the Roper road, and quite near Mr. Keyes' house.

Of Mr. Littlejohn's six children, two lived to maturity, both of them married and removed to New York State during the time of the great emigration thither from Massachusetts.

In 1764 he, with others, joined in the formation of the church in Princeton, being dismissed from Lancaster Second Church, now Sterling. He remained in town more than twenty years, during which time he added to his possessions by the purchase of a small lot of land at the corner of the Lower Westminster road and the Sterling road, west of the "old Russell place," on which spot he may have had a dwelling-house, although there is no record evidence of it.

\* The witnesses to this deed were Jonathan Wilder of Lancaster (Tilly Littlejohn's former master), and Zachariah Harvey, who was living on the "Ebenezer Parker" place in the east part of the town. The deed was not acknowledged until December 2, 1760, and not recorded until Sept. 16, 1764.



FARM OF ROBERT KEYES,  
 "On y<sup>e</sup> easterly side of Wachusett Mountain."

About the year 1777 he removed to that part of Lancaster adjoining Princeton, which was afterwards incorporated as Sterling, where he bought a farm. He was dismissed from the Princeton to the Sterling church in 1786, and died in the latter town November 1, 1793, of "asthma and consumption," according to the church records. His gravestone, now to be seen in the old burying-ground, bears the following inscription:—

Memento Mori  
Erected  
In Memory of Mr.  
**TILLEY LITTLEJOHN**  
who departed this life  
Nov. 1, 1793,  
aged 58 years and  
5 months.

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,  
Draw near with pious reverence and attend;  
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,  
The tender father and the generous friend.

His will dated Nov. 19, 1790, was signed by him, and the signature is identical with that of his appended to the church covenant in 1764, as will be clearly seen by the reproductions herewith:

*Tilley Littlejohns*      *Tilley Littlejohn*

1764

1790

His estate, including his land in Sterling, was valued at £555. The following chronology will show how I have followed him from the cradle to the grave, and enable the reader more clearly to understand the statements previously and subsequently made.

## TILLEY LITTLEJOHN.

- 1735—May 26. Born at Lancaster, Son of Thomas & Mary (Butler) Littlejohn.
- 1755—Apr. 23. Enlisted at Lancaster in Capt. Asa Whitcomb's Co. marched to Albany on the Crown Point expedition.
- 1755—Oct. 25. Discharged from service at Lancaster.
- 1757—Oct. 20. Intention of marriage declared at Lancaster.
- 1757—Dec. 1. Married at Lancaster to Hannah Brooks.
- 1758—Oct. 2. Son Levi born. Not recorded in Lancaster, but on Princeton records at a later date (died 1759).
- 1759—Jan. 22. Then of "a farm on the easterly side of Wachusett Hill in no town, parish or district, in the county of Worcester," bought land of Robert Keyes.
- 1760—Jan. 30. Daughter Hannah born in Princeton (died 1764).
- 1760—Nov. 2. Admitted to Lancaster Second Church (Sterling).
- 1760—Nov. 2. Daughter Hannah baptized in Lancaster Second Church.
- 1763—Jan. 16. Son Levi born in Princeton (died 1764).
- 1763—Oct. 6. Of Princeton, bought a small lot adjoining his first purchase.
- 1764—Aug. 12. Signed covenant at formation of Church in Princeton.
- 1764—Aug. 28. Dismissed from Second Lancaster Church to Princeton Church.
- 1765—Feb. 14. Daughter Mary born in Princeton (died 1776).
- 1767—Mch. 12. Daughter Pamela born in Princeton.
- 1769—  
Son John born in Princeton.
- 1774—Feb. 22. Of Princeton, mortgaged his real estate (including a lot near centre of town, of the purchase of which there is no record). Mortgage discharged Apr. 13, 1787.
- 1776—Mch. 23. Daughter Mary died,—buried in Sterling, which indicates family residing there at that date.
- 1777—Sept. 29. Of Lancaster, bought land there. (Sterling was incorporated 1781.)
- 1778—Nov. 23. Of Lancaster, with wife, and John, Jabez & Thomas Brooks sold land in Lexington.
- 1779—Mch. — Name not on tax list in Princeton.
- 1779—Mch. 7. Of Lancaster, bought land there.

- 1781—Oct. 18. Of Sterling, sold his land in Princeton near the mountain.
- 1784—Feb. 16. Of Sterling, bought land there.
- 1784—Mch. 15. Of Sterling, bought land there.
- 1784—Dec. 17. Of Sterling, bought land there.
- 1786—Jan. 30. Of Sterling, sold the land in Princeton near centre which he mortgaged in 1774 (where he may have lived before his removal to Sterling).
- 1786—Oct. 1. Admitted to the Church in Sterling.
- 1789—Apr. 16. Of Sterling, bought land there.
- 1790—July 5. Of Sterling, signed his will.
- 1793—Nov. 1. Died in Sterling, "of asthma and consumption" (church record and grave stone).
- 1793—Nov. 19. Will proved, wife Hannah, son John and daughter Pamela Priest named. Inventory £555.
- 1794—Jan. 13. Widow Hannah Littlejohn, with son John and daughter Pamela, joined in transfer of real estate in Sterling formerly belonging to Tilly Littlejohn.

It is charged that Mr. Littlejohn, *as the result of a quarrel* with his neighbor Mr. Keyes, killed the child Lucy on the 14th of April, 1755, and concealed the body, and, when an old man dying in New York State, confessed the crime and desired that the fact should be made known in Princeton.

Let us see if the facts will substantiate such a charge or admit of a reasonable belief in its truth.

*First.* Tilly Littlejohn was born in Lancaster, and if we have no proof that he was on the 14th of April, 1755, a *resident of Lancaster*, we have proof that he was such only nine days later, when he was recorded as servant or apprentice to Jonathan Wilder.

*Second.* Tilly Littlejohn was not a neighbor, and could not well have quarreled with Mr. Keyes about bounds of land, as *he did not own any land* near Mr. Keyes or anywhere else, and could not legally have owned any, as *he was not of age*.

*Third.* If he had been there, and if he had quarreled with Mr. Keyes, his disappearance nine days later to enlist in the army would have excited suspicion and led to a belief in his guilt, and probably to his arrest.



*Fourth.* Four years after the loss of the child Mr. Littlejohn did buy a part of Mr. Keyes' farm, where he lived for a number of years and brought up a family. It is *possible*, but certainly *not probable*, that the man who murdered Lucy Keyes on that spot would return and make there a home for his wife and his children.

*Fifth.* Mr. Littlejohn did not have a family in 1755, as Mrs. Brown states, and did not leave Princeton "soon after" the loss of the child, but remained in the town some twenty years after his purchase of property there in 1759.

*Sixth.* Mr. Littlejohn was *not* an *old man* at the time of his death, as he was but fifty-eight years of age.

*Seventh.* He *never lived in Deerfield, New York*, or vicinity, if the statement of his grand-children can be relied upon.

*Eighth.* He certainly *did not die in Deerfield, N. Y.*, but yielded up the ghost in the quiet town of Sterling, Mass., in 1793, where to-day we may see his gravestone with an inscription recounting his virtues "as a loving husband, tender father and generous friend,"—a case, I have no doubt, where the epitaph *tells the truth*.

*Ninth.* Grand-children living to-day who were brought up with Mrs. Littlejohn, (who survived her husband many years,) affirm that they never heard a word of any wrong-doing on the part of their grandfather.

*Tenth.* Admitting error in some of the details, if, as some have suggested, such a confession had been made by Mr. Littlejohn at Sterling, where he died, it certainly would have become quickly known throughout the town and the county.

*These statements, based so largely upon record evidence, are so contradictory to the alleged confession, that the reader must certainly feel that the case against Mr. Littlejohn is at least "not proven."*

Failing to find any evidence to implicate Mr. Littlejohn as a quarrelsome neighbor, I have carefully examined the records to learn who were the owners of land adjoining Mr. Keyes in 1755,

who might possibly have disputed with him the boundary lines between their estates. My research has resulted in finding that the land on the north, east and south of Mr. Keyes' farm was owned by Benjamin Houghton, Esq., of Lancaster, while the mountain on the west was in the possession of the Province. It is not quite clear whether the northerly corner of lot No. 12 of the "Watertown farms," then owned by Mr. Josiah Coolidge of Weston, bordered on Mr. Keyes' south-westerly corner, but, if at all, it was only for a few rods between Pine Hill and the mountain, and was of no value to any one; neither was there any resident on that lot No. 12 until many years afterwards. There appear, therefore, to have been no families near Mr. Keyes in 1755, and *no boundaries to quarrel about*, unless we suppose them to be those of Mr. Houghton, a man of substantial worth, well known throughout the county,—a supposition not worthy of consideration.

I have been asked how I reconcile the statements of Mrs. Brown with the facts here referred to, but I have been unable to reach any satisfactory conclusion. The character of the informant and the circumstantial details of the confession make the mystery so much the greater, and the problem the more difficult to solve. Whether she heard aright the story from Mrs. Whitmore, or the latter correctly received the statement from Mrs. Anderson, or whether Mrs. Anderson was at fault, the reader can judge as well as I.

It is possible that some man, whose mind was wandering in the last hours of his life, may have confessed a crime, and the unknown Mrs. Anderson to whom the story was told may have supplied a name, either by accident or design; or it is possible that Mrs. Whitmore or Mrs. Brown mistook the name of the confessor, or, forgetting the name, assumed that it was Littlejohn, because she remembered that a man bearing that name once lived near the mountain.

We can make many conjectures, but, whatever point we take up to examine critically, we find ourselves in conflict with evidence which seems to demolish any theory connecting Mr. Littlejohn with the murder.

In publishing these notes I have endeavored to give all the

facts that I have been able to gather, and only regret that the mists cannot be entirely cleared away, and the origin or occasion of the mysterious confession be fully made known.

I am indebted to relatives of Mrs. Brown, and also to members of the Littlejohn family, for some suggestions,—the former anxious to assert the trustworthiness of their relative, and the latter equally anxious to remove the stain resting upon the memory of Mr. Littlejohn.

#### NOTE.

In making this investigation I discovered a singular bit of history that at first appeared to offer a possible solution of this problem.

In the southerly part of Princeton there once lived Artemas Maynard, who removed thence to Temple, N. H., where, in 1769, his son Thomas, five years old, was lost. In relation to this event statements are made in every respect similar to those in the case of Lucy Keyes. The agony of the parents, the search for days by organized parties, and the final giving up, with no clue to the cause of his disappearance. But there is a tradition in the Maynard family that *this child was murdered by a bitter enemy of the father.*

When it is known that the mother of this Maynard boy was a Keyes,—that Mrs. Brown, who wrote of the Littlejohn confession, was a Keyes,—that her father lived quite near the Maynards in Princeton,—that he was a connection of the Maynard family, and that Mr. Maynard died in Sterling, where Mr. Littlejohn also died,—it will not seem strange that at first, with all these facts in view, I felt convinced that some one had got these two lost children badly mixed, and that it would require a Solomon to solve the problem. But after receiving a copy of Mrs. Brown's letter, here published, I was constrained to admit that the one case probably had no connection with the other, though it is certainly a strange coincidence.















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