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Robert Vose

AND HIS

Times

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ROBERT VOSE IN ENGLAND

Robert Vose was born in Lancashire, England, about 1599. He was a resident there in 1650, though the statement has many times appeared that he came to America in 1635 with Richard Mather. The first appearance of his name in New England was in 1654, when he purchased from the heirs of "the worshipful Mr. John Glover" of Boston, "for the sum of three hundred and fowre score pounds sterl," over 500 acres of land in that part of Dorchester called Unquatiquisset or Unquity, which, in 1662, was incorporated in the town of Milton. The obligation was dated 13 July, 1654. He was at that time a "gentleman of Dorchester," so had been in New England long enough to establish a residence. But the exact time of his arrival is unknown.

He was the youngest son of Thomas Vose of Lancashire; apparently a man of ability and influence, and belonged to the period which witnessed the struggles of the Reformation.

The Puritanism of Lancashire was confined largely to the southern part. A group of Puritans had sprung up in and about Toxteth Park near Liverpool, and Richard Mather, when only a boy, taught their children. Mather was won over to Puritanism and in preparation for the ministry entered Brasenose college, Oxford, but before he completed his course his friends induced him to become their minister at Toxteth chapel. As this ancient chapel was considered in some respects private property and was not only retained by nonconforming ministers after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, but was licensed under the Act of Toleration as a preaching place for dissenters, Richard Mather, at first, was not much troubled for his nonconformity. But he was not the

sort of man to confine his ministry to a village congregation and was a frequent preacher in many of the neighboring churches and chapels; for this he was finally so "scolded," and threatened with fine and imprisonment if he did not desist, that in 1655 he sailed for New England and settled in Dorchester. As schoolmaster and minister in England, Richard Mather officiated in the parishes of which the Voses were residents, and is found a witness to the will of Edward Vose, an uncle of Robert Vose.

Thomas Vose, Robert's father, appears as a donor for the maintenance of a preaching minister in two Lancashire parishes and for a free school at Much Woolton. The duty of a preaching minister was not only to solemnize the parochial services but to itinerate in the neighborhood and preach in its several churches and chapels, the doctrines of the Reformation.

"It was not until after the outbreak of the great Civil war in the summer of 1642, and until the consequent plundering and raiding by the armies on either side that the attention of the House of Commons was called to the cases of Puritan ministers disturbed or ejected by the Royalist army in various parts of the country." "The first mention of the subject of relief of the ministers that are plundered" is contained in an order of the Commons of 27 Dec. 1642, appointing a collection on their behalf in all the parishes in and about London. Four days later a committee was appointed to consider of the fittest way for the relief of such good and well affected ministers as have been plundered, and likewise to consider what malignant persons have benefices here in and about this town, whose livings being sequestered, these may supply the cure and receive the profits."

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"The explanation of the hitherto most unexplained problem of Commonwealth church history lies in the growth of the powers of the body thus created coming to be as it did, with its legitimate successors, the trustees for the maintenance of ministers, a board of Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a completely disestablished and a partially disendowed English Church."

By virtue of an act of Parliament passed on the 8th of June 1649, entitled, "An Act for the providing maintenance of preaching ministers and other pious uses," commissioners were appointed in each county to report upon the state of each parish, and to forward their reports to London.

"The Lancashire Commission is dated March 29, 1650, and the first meeting was held in Manchester on June 19, following. The Inquisition or inquiry was taken before a local jury of men of good standing and position whose names are given, and before whom witnesses were brought and examined." On the list of jurors with twenty others are the names of John and Robert Vose, gentlemen; they were the sons of Thomas Vose. "By the service of this commission the condition of the more indigent and deserving clergy was considerably improved and would have been much more improved if all their recommendations had been observed."

"The survey showed that there were in Lancashire in 1650, 61 parish churches and 118 chapels, of which no less than 38 were without ministers, chiefly for want of maintenance." The following is an abstract from the report concerning Farnworth, a village in the township of Widnes, an ancient chapelry with a chapel dedicated to St. Wilfred. Within a few years the church which is supposed to be of the age of Henry VIII, has been restored. The register begins in 1538.

"For the present there is none that supplyeth the Cure there. In respect there is but three pounds six shillings eight pence per annum wch is allowed by Patent out of the Revenues of the Dutchy of Lancaster for

the preaching Minist'r there; and one Donative of Tenn pounds given by Thomas Vause (Vose) deceased, the interest of which goes to the use of the manteynance of a p'eaching Minist'r att Farneworth."

The Report in regard to the chapel in the township of Hale is, that it is fit to be made a parish church and Halebancke and part of Halewood included in the parish. "That the tyth of that pt of Halewood amounteth to nyneteen pounds p ann, and the small tythes belong to the Vicarr worth 20s p ann; and wee find that there is no Parsonage or Viccarage p'sentative w'th'n the Towneshipp of Hale afforesaid, and that there is a whyte rent of three shillings five pence in Hale afforesaid; and that there is a donative of five pounds given to the Chappelrie for the manteynance of a Minist'r by Thomas Vause (Vose) late deceased; and remains in the hands of Thomas Linley for the use of the Minist'r afforesaid when there is any that supplyes the Cure there, which is for (the) p'sent vacant."

The small amount of money in circulation in those days is shown by the pay to borough members which was usually 'two shillings a day besides the expense of travelling to and from Westminster. The knights of the shire were allowed 4 shillings and afterwards 5 shillings a day, which great expense on one occasion induced the careful freeholders of Lancashire to unite with their neighbors of Cumberland in sending one member between them, each county paying half his wages."

The school in Much Woolton which received a donation by the will of Thomas Vose was founded in 1641. Previous to the Reformation only three grammar schools existed in the county, and they had recently been founded. One of these three schools was in Farnworth which became "a sort of nursery for Lancashire Puritans." Richard Mather was schoolmaster there at one time. "Before this the only education to be obtained by the poor was in the monasteries and the few boys educated there were usually trained for the priesthood." It

would seem that writing by no means kept pace with reading and learning. Even in the towns few of the tradesmen could write. We get an incidental glimpse of the education of the clergy of this period in the provision made for the teaching of writing and singing in the Free Grammar School at Rivington. A stipend is allotted to the curate of the church if he teach, but if he will not or cannot teach to sing and write another teacher is to be provided. The statutes imply that the purpose of the school (Rivington) is to prepare its pupils for the church, and the still unsettled state of doctrine is shown by "the eldest sort who are ready to become ministers must be perfected in Calvin's Catechism and Institutions."

Rev. E. E. Hale says, "the words Grammar School and Free School, carry with them in England different signification than those to which we are accustomed in America. In England a large number, if not all of the endowed schools are called 'grammar schools' because their founders wished to have boys taught to read Latin and Greek. It would be fair to say that there was no English grammar at that time, as in fact there has never been. To endow a free grammar school meant that the boys of its neighborhood should be taught without charge to read Latin and Greek. It really happens in England to this day, that a boy may go to an endowed school and receive free education in Latin and Greek whose friends would have to pay for instruction in German and French in the same school. With us a free school means one which makes no pecuniary charge for any scholar. In England a free grammar school may mean a school where the classical languages so called, are taught to all comers, while for other studies a payment is exacted. This was in general the expression of a pious wish that the languages of the Vulgate and Septuagint, the Latin and Greek versions of the scriptures, might be widely known among the people."

At about the time Thomas Vose made his donation to assist in the founding of a free school in Lan-

cashire, England, steps were taken by the Puritans in Dorchester, New England, to establish, with a different basis, a free school here, said to be the first public provision made for a free school in America by a direct tax on the inhabitants of a town. The order relating to it reads as follows: "It is ordered that the 20th of May, 1639, that there shall be a rent of 20ls yearly forever imposed upon Tomson's lland to bee payd by evy p'son that hath p'rtie in the said lland according to the p'portion that any such p'son shall fro tyme to tyme inioy and posseesse there, and this towards the mayntenance of a schoole in Dorchester this rent of 20ls yeerly to be payd to such a schoolmaster as shall undertake to teach english, latin and other tongues, and also writing the sayd schoolmaste to bee chosen fro tyme to tyme p the freemen and that is left to the discretion of elders and the 7 men for the tyme beeing whether they maydes shalbe taught with the boyes or not."

The rules and orders presented to the town and confirmed by vote later concerning the school were to the end that, all things that concern the school shall be ordered and disposed in the way "most conducibile for the glory of God, and the trayning up of the children of the towne in religion, learning and Civilitie."

In 1647 the Colonial government passed the following law in regard to schools: "It being one chief project of Satan to keep men from the knowledge of the Scripture, as in former times keeping them in unknown tongues, so in these latter times by perswading from the use of tongues that so at least the true sence and meaning of the originall might be clouded and corrupted with false classes of deceivers, to the end therefore that learning may not be Buried in the graves of our forefathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord attending our endeavors. It is therefore ordered by this Court and Authority thereof, that every Township in this Jurisdiction, after the Lord has increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their towus to teach

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all such children as shall resort to him to Write and Read, where Wages shall be payd, either by the Parents or Masters of such children or by the inhabitants in generall, by way of supply as the major part of them that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint, Provided that those which send their children be not Oppressed by paying much more than

they can have them taught for in other towns."

Thus we see, as Dr. Hale says, "just the same wish expressed itself in our early New England legislation, which provided that boys should have a free education in the classical languages to the end that Satan might be foiled in his wish to keep the Bible from mankind."

HIS ARRIVAL IN NEW ENGLAND AND SETTLEMENT IN MILTON

Returning to affairs in England we find that the knowledge and experience gained on the Lancashire church surveys of 1650 was valuable preparation for the work Robert Vose was to perform later in New England. In 1650, as has been shown, he was still in Lancashire, England. Whatever part Richard Mather may have played in the next important step in Robert Vose's career is only matter of conjecture. But in 1654 we find Robert Vose in Dorchester, New England, purchaser of the large estate of the late John Glover, and it is not surprising to find Richard Mather a witness to the deed of conveyance, showing the two Lancashire men had met again in New England.

John Glover, Richard Mather and Robert Vose were all from Lancashire, but did not come to New England at the same time. With Robert Vose came his wife Jane, two daughters, and three sons; the eldest son died in Milton, unmarried.

Robert Vose was now a man of fifty and more, versed in civil and ecclesiastical affairs; possessed of material resources, and well qualified to be a leader in the community where he had cast in his lot.

By the purchase of the land belonging to the heirs of John Glover, he became the largest resident landholder in Milton at the time of incorporation. His purchase consisted of thirteen separate parcels of land described in a verbose deed of conveyance, occupying six pages of printed matter, in which the names of Ann Glover, executrix of the estate, and her sons, Mr. Habakkuk Glover, Mr. John Glover, Mr. Nathaniel Glover and Mr. Pellatier Glover, their heirs, assigns, executors and administrators are mentioned seventeen times and

Mr. Robert Vose, his heirs, assigns, executors and administrators are mentioned fifteen times. The following are the different parcels acquired: A farm of one hundred and forty acres and dwelling house; ten acres near Robert Redman; one hundred acres on Providence Plain; twenty acres of meadow adjoining; thirty-five acres he purchased of John Phillips adjoining the farm; thirty acres adjoining the above lot; one half of two lots of common land on south side of the Neponset river; forty acres of meadow near Mr. Stoughton's farm; forty acres of upland near the Blue Hills; a certain "scurt" of land near the "playne;" three-quarters of an acre for a landing place below Mistress Stoughton's mill; six acres of salt marsh, and other lands not specifically accounted for, amounting in all, not including the latter, to over five hundred acres.

In 1838, an ancient plan of Milton on parchment was discovered among the papers belonging to the Proprietors of Dorchester, inscribed with the following memorandum:—"This plan was drawn on a paper plat formerly made by Mr. John Oliver for the Town of Dorchester, and now by their order is drawn on parchment by Joshua Fisher, April 25, 1661." John Oliver died in 1646. The following entry occurs in the Dorchester Town Records: "9 (7) 1661, 40 shillings that Lieutenant Fisher had for new drawing of the map."

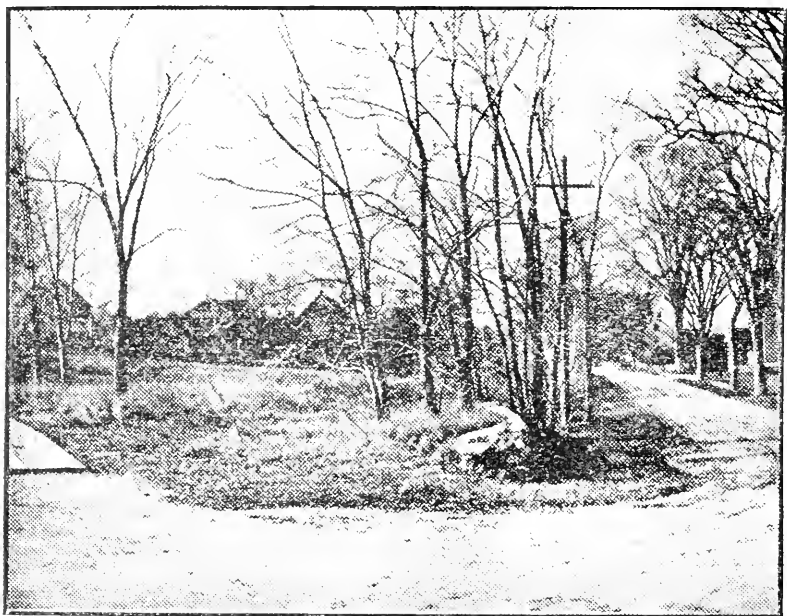
This plan furnishes the outlines of the town of Milton at the time the first grants were taken up. Among these is outlined a part of the grant to John Glover from the town of Dorchester in 1644 and sold to Robert Vose in 1654. It is thus described in

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the deed: "All that Dwelling house and farme Where now Nicholas Wood dwells with ye barne Cowhouses out-houses yards orchards gardins with whatsoever privileges unto ye said house is hereunto belongeing or Appertayneing wth seaven score acres of Upland and meadow more or less, within fence lying about ye said house, upon wch ye said house standeth, wth a parcell of Lande about tenne acres more or less between the calfe pasture and Robert Redmans."

handed down from father to son to the fifth generation of Voses. It stood at the junction of Canton avenue and Brook Road, where the cellar was in evidence up to the middle of the last century.

The westerly bound of the homestead ran northwest from some point on Canton Avenue, not far from the Town Hall lot, straight to the brook, probably including the land on which the Vose school building stands; the northerly bound followed the brook



SITE OF ROBERT VOSE'S HOUSE.

Nicholas Wood here mentioned came over from the old country with Mr. Glover, and, as his agent or farmer, had charge of the cattle kept at the farm west of Milton Hill.

This farm embracing a wide territory of one hundred and seventy-six acres, as outlined on the plat, became the homestead of Robert Vose. The house here described was known as the "old Vose house" and was

as it winds to its bend just beyond Ruggles Lane; the easterly bound ran from the last mentioned point, along the westerly slope of Milton Hill between Russell and School Streets to Churchill's Lane, including the Glover school lot and other estates on School street, and the Weston estate and land formerly of Mrs. Francis Cunningham; the southerly bound was the parallel line to the

point of beginning. Although Robert Vose's territory extended south of it, the parallel line is described as the southerly boundary of the homestead.

The parallel line marked by a stone wall, ran from the southwesterly slope of Milton Hill on the east to the fresh meadows or present Canton line on the west. After the town of Milton was incorporated, the road now known as Canton Avenue was laid out on this central parallel line from Atherton's tavern to Centre Street. "The line continued from Centre Street to Vose's Lane and still on straight, north of the Blanchard estate to Randolph Avenue. From here until it reached Churchill's Lane just beyond where the sewer crosses, it has become extinct by later transfers."

Although Robert Vose was not a church member, he was active and zealous in the maintenance and advancement of the ministry. His service on the Lancashire church surveys had no doubt given him interest and understanding of the needs of the clergy, and in 1662 he made a gratuitous conveyance of eight acres of his estate to the town for "ministerial purposes."

On the land thus donated was built a parsonage or ministerial house, by agreement of the inhabitants or freeholders of the town of Milton, who "covenant and agree yt ye sd house and land, shall be and remain to be to ye use and behoof of such Minister as God shall successively from time to time send amongst us." This was in accordance with an order of The first Court of Assistants holden at Charlton (Charlestown), August 23th Ano Dm 1630. Imp'r, it was ppounded howe the ministers should be mayntayned It was ordered that houses should be built for them with convenient speede, att the publique charge."

The location of the "ministerial lot" had been accepted until recently as on Vose's Lane and Centre Street; it is so stated in the History of Milton; but Mr. John A. Tucker in his exhaustive research has shown conclusively that the lot was in that part

of Robert Vose's farm described in the deed of conveyance as "a parcell of land about tenne acres more or less lying between the calf pasture and Robert Redman's." It took a part of the tract now occupied by the Weston, Johnson, Apthorp and Peabody estates on the east of Randolph Avenue, reaching back to Churchill's Lane, and by the Beck, Emerson, Wood and Sigourney property on the west side of the avenue. An old wall at the rear of the last mentioned estates was probably the bound on the west end of this ten-acre lot, and beyond that was the lot called the calf pasture. The southern boundary was the swamp. The parsonage was on Churchill's Lane and at the head of the lane stood the first meeting-house.

In 1681, after the ordination of Rev. Peter Thacher, the first settled minister of Milton, the town voted to convey to him twenty acres of the ministerial land near the centre of the town.

Notwithstanding the possession of this land, Mr. Thacher continued to live in the parsonage on Churchill's Lane until 1689, when he built a new house for himself on Providence Plain, on land which he had purchased of Thomas Vose in 1683, and which adjoined the ministerial land given him. The old parsonage on Churchill's Lane, having served its purpose, was then sold to Robert Vose's son Edward, who held adjacent lands.

Some of us recall the old house that used to stand near the private way running between Churchill's Lane and Randolph Avenue; it was called "the Hollis House." Mr. Tucker says: "It is said to have been an old Vose house, and it is barely possible it was the same house which served for the parsonage in Peter Thacher's day. Not many years ago the house was burned. The parsonage or its successor appears to have been the only house on what was the eight acre ministry grounds till Thomas Hollis, Jr., built the Sigourney house about 1834."

When Robert Vose settled here in 1654, there was not a recorded

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road in this part of Dorchester, south of the Neponset, and no way across the river except by a ford. Mistress Stoughton had a foot-bridge with a hand-rail by the mill. In 1664 there were three recorded roads in the town; the "country Heigh Way" over Milton Hill, now Adams Street, laid out in 1654; "the way from the landing place by the mill through Robert Vose's farm" now Canton Avenue, 1660; and "the way to John Ffenno's house leading to the Blue Hills," now Churchill's Lane, 1661.

Brook Road, leading from Vose's Lane, by the Vose school building, and crossing the brook is an ancient way, shown by the following record:

At a meeting of the Selectmen the

8 (11) 1671, "The same day Thomas Switt Junr as selectman of Melton came before the select men, to be resolved in a question concerning a way runing through Goodman Vose his farme from John Gil's barrs unto the rowerteenth lott, whether ther should not be allowance for the land which the way taks upp; In answer thereunto the Select men of Dorchester saith, that the use of the way and the right thereunto was long before Goodman Vosse, or Mr. Glover had a farme granted or laid out, and therefore we conclud that when the farme was laid out, there was allowance in measurer for the highway, and nothing demanded for allowance ever since until of late."

MILTON IN 1662

In 1659 Robert Vose was one of the four men chosen as a committee for the laying out of the Common Lands, and in 1662 he was one of the three petitioners for the incorporation of Milton.

The town then was for the most part a wilderness, with a few scattered farms and some open pasturage land. The huge task these early settlers undertook was to make this strange wilderness habitable, and to that end all shared the labor and hardships alike. One of the first things to be done, as shown by the records, was to run the boundary lines which at this early period, were not definitely established, between Dorchester and Roxbury, Dorchester and Braintree, or the several grants of lots. There was laying out of lots, and highways; fixing pales about the lots; keeping in order all fences about their own farms, as required by law; keeping their cattle, horses, sheep, swine and goats within prescribed bounds; the cattle branded and the swine ringed and yoked as required; killing wolves which infested the region and for which a bounty was paid; (The same Day, 8: 12, 1657, the constable, John Capen, was to pay unto Robert Vose for a wolfe, 1-0-0.) felling and hewing trees for building timber and fencing as permitted; bringing their land under a state of cultivation and then making war on the blackbirds that destroyed their crops; ordering and conducting the affairs of the town; meeting the problem of taxes, of which that for the support of the ministry was no small part; and performing military service during Indian hostilities. In the Indian disturbances of 1675-6 the outlying districts even in Milton were deemed unsafe on account of them. William Trescott, who lived on the farm afterwards belonging to Hon.

James M. Robbins, asked for the "abatement of his taxes 1675-6, because of the troubles of the wars, whereby he deserted his place at Brush Hill."

Nearly opposite Robbins Street is a lane leading from Canton Avenue towards the Blue Hills Reservation, once known as "the way over to the Old Wolfe Pets;" it runs in a southerly direction and in former times, turning easterly, crossed Pine Tree brook and continued through the Town Farm lot and the Russell estate to land formerly of Samuel Wadsworth. In 1698 Gov. William Stoughton sold to William Sumner five acres of land, described in the deed of conveyance as "South of the Brook that runs under the Pine Tree bridge and below the path that goes over the Brook above'd a little below a little fresh meadow which lies at the place known and called by the name of the Wolfe Pitts." This locality is on the southerly side of Canton Avenue in the neighborhood of Harland Street. West of Highland Street, now partly included in the estate of Philip P. Chase is a tract of land known as the "Wolf Pit lot." The pits were covered over with brush not strong enough to bear the weight of a wolf, and baited with the carcass of a sheep or some other animal. Once caught in the pit, it was impossible for the wolf to spring out again.

It will give us an idea of the sparse settlement of Milton at that time to learn in what part of the town the eighteen inhabitants lived who signed the covenant in regard to the ministerial house and land, for they probably comprised the entire number of freeholders then constituting the town of Milton; the majority of them held by turns nearly every town office, and many of them lived to four score years of age. Seven of the eighteen

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names are borne by families, lineal descendants, living in the town today.

First in the list of signers is **Robert Vose**, whose place of residence at the junction of Canton avenue and Brook Road, has already been described.

Anthony Gulliver's house stood on Squantum Street on the north side of Unquity brook.

Samuel Wadsworth, who later lost his life in King Phillip's war, lived in a house that stood in the triangle formed by Randolph Avenue, Highland Street and Reed's Lane. The house is said to have been burned in 1669.

Thomas Vose lived on Gun Hill Street.

Robert Redman lived on Churchill's Lane, and **John Fenno** was his neighbor on the east side of the lane.

Robert Babcock's house stood on the site of Mr. T. Edwin Ruggles's house on Ruggles Lane. The oldest part of the house is said to be the original Badcock house. The brook is styled in old records "Robert Badcock's river."

James Hoften or Houghton, bought of Nicholas Ellen and Mary, his wife, who was the widow of Robert Pond, the house and land on both sides Lincoln Street that belonged to Robert Pond. He may have lived there.

Robert Tucker lived on Brush Hill "at the upper end of the old highway where it joined Brush Hill Road." His house, as indicated in his will, stood on the southwest corner of Robbins Street and Brush Hill Road.

David Himes's residence has not been ascertained. Nothing has been found to show that he was a landholder. There is the record of his marriage in Dorchester and the birth of four children in Milton. According to the Dorchester records the Widow Himes suffered under the order relating to the entertainment of strangers in that town. "The 9th (7) 1667. The same day William Sumner was desired to speak with the Widdow Hims (who is lately come into this town) to informe her that

she must returne to the place from whence she came." This was in accordance with a Colonial law, "That noe p'son should take into ther house ore habitation any p'son without the allowance ore consent off the selectmen upon such penalty as the selectmen shall see good to lay upon them."

William Salisbury lived on Churchill's Lane and abutted Robert Vose on the south. **Anthony Newton** owned land east of him nearer Gulliver's Creek. Both men were interested in shipbuilding that was carried on at a very early date, at or near the landing place, now Gulliver's Creek.

Thomas Swift lived on the southwest side of Adams Street near Dudley Road of today; the house stood in the field about forty rods back from the street.

William Daniel lived and kept a tavern where the house of the late Theodore Glover now stands. The Foye mansion occupied the same site before the Glover house was built. The only record we have of the Rev. Mr. Bouse who preached as a candidate here in 1670, is Goodman Daniel's charge of one shilling and sixpence, "for bread and wine for Mr. Bouse." The town record reads: "It was agreed by vote that Mr. Bouse should be desired to be helpful to us by way of trial." Rev. Mr. Bouse appears to have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Richard Collicott was here very early before the arrival of the Dorchester people. He was a fur trader and brought into close relations with the Indians. He is said to have built the first house in Unquity, (Milton) on the west side of Adams Street near the junction of Centre Street.

John Gill lived in Unquity before 1652. His house stood on the north side of Adams Street, almost opposite the opening of Pleasant Street.

Henry Crane lived at what is now East Milton, on the north side of Adams Street. His house stood

back from the street between the present residences of Messrs. Baxter and Simpson. His estate was the limit of the town in that direction.

Stephen Kinsley's house stood on the north side of Adams Street, on land now owned by Ernest Bowditch. He was at first a resident of Braintree. "In 1653 he was ordained as a ruling elder of the Braintree church, removed to Unquity at an early date, and instituted religious worship in the east part of the town in connection with some of the inhabitants of Braintree. The services may have been conducted by himself or by some clergyman of whom there is no mention in our records."

"Regular preaching services were held in Unquity and Milton at least twenty-two years before a church was organized."

It is not to be supposed that the brethren here were more contentious than those elsewhere. But whatever the reason, there was no church organization in Milton until 1678, sixteen years after the incorporation of the town, and then, according to the records, "because of some opposition yt did appear," the Milton Church was organized in the Mother church at Dorchester.

Ministers were settled by the towns in town meetings and the salary was established and voted, and in 1654, "that there may be a settled and encouraging maintenance of ministers in all towns and congregations within their jurisdiction, it is ordered that the county court in every shire shall, upon information given them, of any defect of any congregation or town within the shire, order and appoint what maintenance shall be allowed the ministers of the places and shall issue out warrants to the Selectmen to assess the Inhabitants, which the constable of the said town shall collect and levy as other Town rates."

The Town Meeting was an open, free, deliberative assembly, where affairs of the church and local government were discussed and settled with outspoken independence. Liberty of discussion in town meetings, at length had to be curbed. In 1645

it was voted by the inhabitants of Dorchester that in order to prevent "the disorderly Jarringe of our Meetings and the intemperate clashinges and hasty indigested and Rash votes, that votes of any concernment be first drawne up in meetinge and then deliberately published 2 or 3 tymes and Liberty given for any to speake his mind moderately and meekly and then the Signe to be required, and things more orderly carried and dispach'd."

In the early days the meeting-house was not considered a sacred edifice, "Until after the Revolutionary War it was universally used as a powder magazine." It was used for town-meetings and also served as a store-house. "Squirrels attracted by the grain stored in the loft, exercised their nibbling habit on Bible and pulpit cushions, so that in some localities on every Sunday afternoon the Word of God and its sustaining cushion had to be removed to the safe shelter of a neighboring farm house or tavern to prevent total annihilation by these Puritanical, Bible-loving squirrels." On the meeting-house were posted matters of public interest, marriage intentions, notices, orders and regulations, sales etc. The following has been preserved:

"Strayes.

Milton, Jan. 24, 1672.

There is in the hands of Thomas Voss of Milton, two steers about 3 yeares old, the one red with two Nicks in the off ear, and a short tayle, the other black with two white Leggs behind, and ye end of his tayle white, a Piece cut out of his off ear, they wer taken up the 26 Xbr last and were Prized by Thomas Swift and Samuel Wadsworth both at 4 pounds, haveing been cried three tymes according to Law."

The wolf-killer was ordered to bring the gory head, if he wished to obtain the reward, and "nayle it to the meeting house and give notis thereof." On the green stood the horse-blocks to aid the women and the old men to mount and dismount, and also "those Puritanical instruments of punishment, the stocks, whipping post, pillory and cage."

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"Our Puritan fathers made it a matter of conscience to call the days of the week by numerals, and to call the months in the same way, as the Quakers do to this day . . . They thought it was giving honor to the heathen gods, and to pagan worship, to call their days Sunday or Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday, or to call their months January or March or May. But while this scruple has been so tenacious among the Friends, that even Mr. Whittier continued to follow it as long as he lived, our Puritan fathers had laid it aside before their colonies had completed their first century."

Geo. E. Ellis, contrasting New England history during its Puritan age with the contemporary history of the Puritans who remained in England, says: "The influences of their exile

with deprivations and hardships, and their freedom to follow out to extremes their own proclivities, prejudices and fancies tended to an exaggeration of the natural austerity of the Puritanism here while it was held in restraint among Puritans at home. The ivy-clad churches and towers, the chime of bells, the sports on the green, the village festivals, the bridal revelries and the holiday delights, all entering into the heritage of 'Merry England,' were not without their softening and amiable working upon the sentiments even of those least in sympathy with them because of their Puritan spirit. But the exiles here parted with all these mute and pleading influences which soften and enrich the heart and cheer the routine of toil and brighten the family home."

SECOND MEETING HOUSE AND VOSE'S LANE

Good Peter Thacher evidently had misgivings about his ability to shepherd the wilful Milton flock, for in his address accepting the call to the church, after a residence of nine months among the people, he makes this significant remark: "Notwithstanding. . . my great discouragements in the work of the ministry, not only in respect of ye great duty and difficulty of ye work in itself considered, but especially in ys place in respect of those lamentable animosities and divisions which have been in ys place, which both occasioned your unsettlement untill now wch ye Lord for his own name sake pardon, and prevent for ye future."

About 1670 when the building of the second meeting-house was under consideration, the first action taken in the matter was at a town meeting held Sept. 30, 1670, when it was decided to locate the new meeting house "neare about Goodman Vose his loked barre and also that the old meeting house should be repaired."

"The vote of the town in regard to this place for the meeting house not being agreeable to Goodman Vose, the town early the next year, Jan. 12, 1671, voted that the house should stand upon the west side of Goodman Vose's Lande at the corner of his son Thomas Vose's stone wall next to Henry Glover his house on the way sid and Robert Vose did agree thereunto.' This situation for a meeting house would have had the advantage of being near the cemetery. But though the number of inhabitants was limited there still appeared a lack of harmony causing another delay, and it was nearly a year later when a final decision was made."

"This appears from the following extract taken from the town records: 'At a public meeting in Milton the 11th of the 11th mo, 1671, it was vot-

ed in the town that the meeting house shall be sot upon Goodman Vose's land near the locke bars and ye neighbors . . . did freely consent thereunto, also the town did purchase of Goodman Vose 6 rods square of land for to set the meeting house on and for consideration the 6 rods square the town was to allow Thomas Vose his rat to the meeting house freely.'

The spot thus chosen was on the corner of Vose's Lane and Centre Street, and occupied about two-thirds of the present Blanchard estate."

First and last the locating of the meeting house on his land was to Robert Vose the source of considerable annoyance. After the meeting house was built, a highway was laid out across his land to which he objected as is shown by the following town record: "And whereas, the above said Committee, namely Capt. Hopestill Foster, Capt. Richard Bracket and Sargt. Thomas Gardinner in the year 1673, the matter being left to them by the parties concerned as the record saith did then order and allow an open hyeway to lye and run from the meeting hous down to robart voses barn and from thence to the woods gate but it being greuious to sd Vose the then present selectmen upon consideration did agree with sd vose to take of and remoue said way prouided sd vose would give land two rods wide from the woods gate on the outside of his land next Robart Badcock's land till it comes to the pararill line, to be an open hye waye for the town's use which two rods wide of land hath beene left and fenced out for sd use and seruis and is now improued for a waye for the town's use and it being neglected to make a record of sd agreement and remoueaill of sd way in the time of it, we the present select men in this

ROBERT VOSE AND HIS TIMES

present year, 1694 do allow and confirm the above sd agreement and removal of sd way as above said and do make record of the same this 26 day of February 1694-5.

Thomas Vose, Town Clerk." This was the origin of Vose's Lane.

We have hints of Robert Vose's personal qualities. That he was public spirited and generous is shown by his gift to the town of the ministry lot. That he was a stubborn force when opposed to a measure, is shown by his attitude towards the town vote in regard to the location of the second meeting-house. We must infer that he was a man of hasty temper from the fact that Parson Thacher advised him to stand up in the congregation and acknowledge it.

"Father Vose was with me I spake to him to acknowledge his passionateness in the congregation." Parson Thacher also jots down in his journal: "Difficulty about Father Vose's admission to the church." Whatever the difficulty was it was overcome, for on July 17, 1687, Father Vose was received into full communion with the Milton church.

In 1657 Robert's daughter Elizabeth married Thomas Swift, son of Thomas Swift, senior, the emigrant from England, and in 1659 her father gave her verbally nineteen and three-quarters acres in the eleventh lot. This he confirmed by deed Feb. 23, 1663. The tract of land was south of the parallel line and extended towards the Braintree line; it included the estate of Mr. Tuell, part of the estate of Mr. Wallace Pierce, and others. Traces of the old wall that formed the boundary line are still to be seen on the land of Mr. Pierce.

In 1661 he gave his son Thomas, probably at the time of his marriage, six and one-quarter acres of land west of the eighth lot, a gift which he confirmed by deed in April, 1672. Thomas was then in possession of the premises which were on the west side of Gun Hill Street.

On May 23, 1666, Robert Vose was admitted to the freedom of the Colony. Very early it was enacted that freemen should be restricted to

church members; it was in force until about 1664. It may be inferred that Robert did not become freeman until this time because he was not a church member.

In 1669 and 1677 he was one of the selectmen of Milton, and in other years served on various committees appointed to look after the welfare of the town.

In February, 1682, he gave his son Edward, mentioning him as his "eldest son now living," the homestead of seven score acres, and six acres of salt marsh. Edward at the time was living on the farm and for several years had lived there; and a contract of even date with this instrument was made with his father, for his maintenance during life.

Edward died in his eightieth year leaving most of the homestead to his son Nathaniel who is to allow him "an honorable and comfortable maintenance." A portion of this land is still held by Robert Vose's descendants of the eighth generation.

In January, 1682, Robert Vose sold to his son Thomas, for 228 pounds, more than half of his entire estate situated in different parts of the town. As this deed locates parts of Robert's estate not specifically placed, it may be well to mention in what part of the town they were situated.

Seventy-one acres, more or less, in the northerly half of the 9th and 10th lots, on a part of which, at that time, Thomas's dwelling house stood, was land south of the parallel line, some eighty acres in all, extending nearly to Pleasant Street in one direction and from Gun Hill Street probably to the Sias lot, including the Barnard, now Upton estate, and others. The dwelling house stood on the west side of Gun Hill Street, the clump of lilac bushes and old well there probably mark the exact site.

The one hundred acres on Providence Plain were granted Mr. Glover in 1644. The tract is described in the deed of Robert to Thomas Vose as having two houses and a barn standing upon the said land which is butted and bounded: "North, Naponsett River; east, Ezra Clapp; south, Balssons

SECOND MEETING HOUSE AND VOSE'S LANE

Brook; west, Dorchester church land." sections of an old stone wall some fourteen rods west of Thacher Street still mark, here and there, the original boundary on the east; the western bound followed the line of an old stone wall, west of Blue Hill Parkway. The "twenty acres of meadow adjoining" extended up to and skirted Pope's ice pond.

The entire Vose lot of one hundred acres on Providence Plain finally came into the possession of the Thacher family. To the twenty-three acres "with a house and barn standing on the land" which Parson Thacher bought of

Thomas Vose in 1683 for his homestead, thirty-four years later his wife added by purchase of Henry, son of Thomas Vose, seventy-seven acres of upland and ten acres of meadow. The house mentioned in the deed of Thomas Vose to Parson Thacher was presumably unfit for occupancy as he built a new house there before removing from the parsonage on Churchill's Lane.

In his journal Jan. 13, 1699, he wrote: "We had an exceeding great feat of wind for near 24 hours which blew down my little house and the wind was southwest and very cold."

CUSTOMS IN ROBERT VOSE'S TIME---CLOSE OF LIFE

It was in 1689 that Parson Thacher moved to his new house on "Providence Plain" known thereafter as Thacher Plain, and here he lived until his death in 1727, an event thus referred to by Judge Sewall in his Diary:

"Lord's day, Dec. 17. I was surprised to hear Mr. Thacher of Milton, my old Friend, prayed for as dangerously sick. Next day, Dec. 18, 1727, I am informed by Mr. Gerrish that my dear friend died last night; which I doubt bodes ill to Milton and the Province, his dying at this Time, though in the 77th year of his age. Deus avertat Omen!

"Friday, Dec. 22, the day after the fast, was inter'd. Bearers Rev. Mr. Nehemiah Walter, Mr. Joseph Baxter, Mr. John Swift, Mr. Samuel Hunt, Mr. Joseph Sewall, Mr. Thomas Prince. I was inclined before and having a pair of Gloves sent me, I determined to go to the Funeral, if the Weather prov'd favorable, which it did, and I hired Blake's coach with four Horses. My son, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Prince went with me. Refreshed there with Meat and Drink, got thither about half an hour past one. It was sad to see triumphed over my dear Friend! I rode in my Coach to the Burying place; not being able to get nearer by reason of the many Horses. From thence went directly up the Hill, where the Smith's shop, and so home very comfortably and easily, the ground being mollified. But when I came to my own Gate, going in, I fell down, a board slipping under my Left foot, my right Legg raised off the skin, and put me to a great deal of pain, especially when 'twas washed with rum. It was good for me that I was thus afflicted that my spirit might be brought into a frame more suitable to the Solemnity, which is apt to be too light; and by the loss of some of my skin, and blood I might

be awakened to prepare for my own Dissolution, Mr. Walter prayed before the corps was carried out. I had a pair of Gloves sent me before I went, and a Ring given me there. Mr. Millar, the church of England minister, was there. At this Funeral I heard of the death of my good old Tenant Capt. Nathaniel Niles, that very Friday morn. I have now been at the Interment of four of my Classmates. . . . Now I can go to no more Funerals of my classmates nor none be at mine; for the survivors, the Rev. Mr. Samuel Mather, at Windsor and the Rev. Mr. Taylor at Westfield are one hundred miles off, and are entirely enteebled. I humbly pray that Christ may be graciously present with us all Three both in Life and in Death, and then we shall safely and comfortably walk through the shady valley that leads to Glory." Judge Sewall was the last survivor eventually.

In the time of Robert Vose, Puritan ministers were not permitted to perform the marriage service, for it was a purely civil contract, nor to officiate at funerals. The following is from the "Annals of King's Chapel": On May 15, 1686, the frigate 'Rose' from England brought the Rev. Robert Ratcliffe the first minister of the English church who had ever come commissioned to officiate on New England soil. It was proposed that he should have one of the three Congregational meeting-houses for services. This, however, was denied him, but he was allowed the use of the library room in the east end of the Town House which stood where the Old State House now stands. Three days later on Tuesday, May 18, Judge Sewall thus records the first marriage ceremony by a clergyman in New England.

"Tuesday, May 18. A great wedding from Milton, and are married by Mr. Randolph's chaplain at Mr.

Shrimpton's accordin to ye Service-Book, a little after Noon, when Prayer was had at ye Town House; Was another married at ye same time; The former was Vosse's son. Borrowed a ring. 'Tis sd they having asked Mr. Cook and Addington, and yy declining it, went after to ye President, and he sent ym to ye Parson.' "

The contracting parties were Henry, grandson of Robert Vose, and Elizabeth, daughter of Robert Badcock, all of Milton.

"Hutchinson says: 'I suppose there had been no instance of a marriage lawfully celebrated by a layman in England when they (Puritans) left it. I believe there was no instance of marriage by a clergyman after they arrived, during their charter, but it was always done by a magistrate, or by persons specially appointed for this purpose.' May 29, 1686, after the wedding above described, Dudley issued a proclamation authorising the clerical function."

Early New England funerals are thus described by Lechford:

"At Burials nothing is read nor any Funeral Sermon made, but all the neighborhood or a good company of them come together by tolling of the bell, and carry the dead solemnly to his grave and there stand by him while he is buried. The ministers were commonly present," but took no part. One of the old Puritan writers said, "All prayers over or for the dead are not only superstitions and vain, but are also idolatry and against the plain scriptures of God."

"After 60 or 70 years a few ministers began to pray at funerals in Massachusetts, and Mather says, about 1719, in many towns the minister made a prayer at the house and a short speech at the grave; in other places these were wholly omitted."

The first instance, so far as known, of a prayer at a funeral in Massachusetts, was at the burial of Rev. William Adams from Roxbury in 1685. Judge Sewall has noted it in his Diary. "I took one Spell at carrying him. Mr. Wilson (of Medfield) prayed with the company before they went to the grave."

"There were, as a rule, two sets of bearers appointed; under-bearers, usually young men, who carried the coffin on a bier; and pall-bearers, men of age, dignity or consanguinity, who held the corners of the pall which was spread over the coffin and hung down over the heads of the under-bearers."

"The order of procession to the grave was a matter of much etiquette. High respect and equally deep slights might be rendered to mourners in the place assigned. Judge Sewall often speaks of 'leading the widow in a mourning cloak.'"

"Throughout New England, bills for funeral baked meats were large in items of rum, cider, whiskey, lemons, sugar, spice. A careful and above all an experienced committee was appointed to superintend the mixing of the funeral grog or punch and to attend to the liberal and frequent dispensing thereof."

"One great expense of a funeral was the gloves, sent as an approved and elegant form of invitation. At the funeral of the wife of Gov. Belcher in 1736, over one thousand pairs of gloves were given away. Rings were given at funerals, especially in wealthy families, to near relatives and persons of note in the community. Judge Sewall records in his Diary in the years 1687-1725, the receiving of no less than fifty-seven mourning rings."

In 1741 the Massachusetts Provincial Government finding "the giving of scarves, gloves, wine, rum and rings at funerals is a great and unnecessary expence, and while practiced will be detrimental to the Province and tend to the impoverishing of many families,"—ordered "that no scarves, gloves (except six pair to the bearers, and one pair to each minister of the church or congregation where any deceased person belongs) wine, rum or or rings shall be allowed and given at any funeral, upon the penalty of fifty pounds to be forfeited by the executor or administrator to the will or estate of the person interred, or other person that regulates or is at the expence of the funeral (to be paid by him out of his own estate.)" One half

ANCESTRAL LANDS NEAR BLUE HILL—CLOSE OF LIFE

of this fine was given the informer and the other half "for the use of the poor where the person interred did last belong."

The funeral of old Parson Thacher must have been an impressive scene. All the inhabitants of the town and many from outside the limits were probably in attendance at the parsonage on the Plain. It was December, the time of year when nature wears her grimmest, sternest aspect; leafless trees; brown, withered grasses; even the pleasant babble of the nearby brook frozen to silence; and in the midst, all face to face with the mystery of death.

Into this grey setting the ruddy Saxon face of old Judge Sewall in his coach and four, comes as a welcome relief, a touch of warm effective coloring in a sombre picture.

The Thacher family held the estate many years after Peter Thacher's death. In 1796 it was sold to Enoch Fenno, a potter. He carried on his business in a building that stood where the Robson house now stands. Long afterwards in 1834, the building which had been converted into a dwelling house was burned. The fate of the old parsonage is unknown; it disappeared more than a century ago. The time came between 1834 and 1846 when the entire Vose estate on "Providence Plaine" was without a human habitation.

Dr. Teele said in 1895: "It is proposed, if possible to secure the land embracing the old cellar and with proper boundaries and inscriptions, pass it down to posterity as a sacred spot ever to be remembered."

This has now been done. Moved by true sentiment for the past, Mr. John A. Tucker has bought the lots covering the site of Peter Thacher's home and thus rescued the spot from the obliteration that threatened. The elm growing from the cellar bears this inscription cemented into a cavity in the trunk of the tree. "Peter Thacher, His Journal, 1684. Dec. 5, Ebed began to dig clay to make bricks;" and below this: "Peter Thacher, His Home 1689-1727." Ebed was Parson Thacher's slave. Some

of the original bricks are preserved in the tree trunk.

Of Thomas Vose's land at Brush Hill, the forty acres of upland and one half of the two separate lots of common land, probably extended on Brush Hill Road to Paul's bridge, and included the lot on which Henry Vose settled when he went from Providence Plain to Brush Hill. The forty acres of Blue Hill meadow were a part of the "Fowl Meadows."

The 50th lot was a tract of fifty acres and embraced what is now the Eustis estate, including both sides of the present Canton Avenue.

Thomas, son of Robert Vose was a man of note in his day. "For many years he was town recorder, and under his management the town records assumed a systematic and business-like form."

Among the earliest records relating to schools we find: "March 4th, 1669, Thomas Vose was chosen scoole master for the East end of the town to teach children and youth to write he excepting the same." "The school was at the head of Vose's now Churchill's Lane. There is good evidence that it was kept in the old meeting-house, doubtless used for both purposes." The old town Records bear testimony to the beauty of his penmanship. For seventeen years he served as town clerk; eighteen years as selectman; ten years as Representative to the General Court and was appointed on the church and town committees of his day. He was lieutenant under Capt. Wadsworth in King Phillip's war; he was commissioned Captain in the war against the Indians; and was appointed one of the Captains in the expedition to Canada.

Thomas Vose died in 1708. His descendants settled on the ancestral lands at Brush Hill, and on Canton Avenue near Atherton Street. "The old Vose house," so called, on Brush Hill, stood on the south side of Brush Hill Road nearly opposite the Elijah Tucker house. Capt. Thomas Vose, great grandson of Robert, lived in a house that stood on Canton Avenue near the corner of Atherton Street.

ROBERT VOSE AND HIS TIMES

In this house was born Daniel Vose, who built the Suffolk Resolves house near the landing at Milton Lower Mills; it was afterwards removed to its present location and enlarged. The landing was included in the deed of conveyance of Ann Glover to Robert Vose.

Robert's youngest daughter, Martha, married first, John Sharp of Muddy River (later Brookline). He was a lieutenant under Capt. Samuel Wadsworth of Milton and with him lost his life in the Indian ambuscade in Sudbury, whither they had gone to succor the imperilled inhabitants. She was left with children and later married Jabez Buckminster, whom she also outlived.

After disposing of his real estate there remained to Robert Vose only his personal property to be distributed. His will, written on the 10th of September, 1683, is as follows:

"In the name of God Amen, the last Will and Testament of Robert Vose of Milton in the County of Suffolke in the Massachusetts Colony in New England, Yeoman, having my ordinary reason and understanding and memory blessed bee the Lord for the same: And whereas I have already settled and disposed my Housing and Lands and stock of cattle unto my two Sons Edward Vose and Thomas Vose as by deeds under my hand and seale may appeare. And also have made provision for the paying of my debts and for my own maintenance and funeral charges after my decease by my son Edward Vose under his hand and seale bearing date the twentieth day of February, 1682, do now make this my last Will and Testament. And first of all I renounce, reject and make void all former wills and Testaments by me made. Item, I give unto my loveing daughter Martha Buckminster my Bed and Bedsteed with all the Clothing and Furniture belonging to it, after my decease, with my trunke and small chest in my bed chamber: Item, My will is that all my Books bee equally divided amongst my three children Edward Vose, Thomas and Martha. Item, My will is that all my household goods

shal bee my son Edward's after my decease. Item, My will is that what I do hereby give my daughter Martha shal bee bestowed on her children if shee do not spend them herselfe for her own maintenance; Item, I do appoint my two sons Edward Vose and Thomas Vose to bee my Execut'rs of this my last Will and Testam't. In Witness whereof I have hereunto Set My hand and Seale this 10th day of September, 1683.

ROBERT VOSE.

Signed and sealed in presence of Rob't Badcock, Walter Morey."

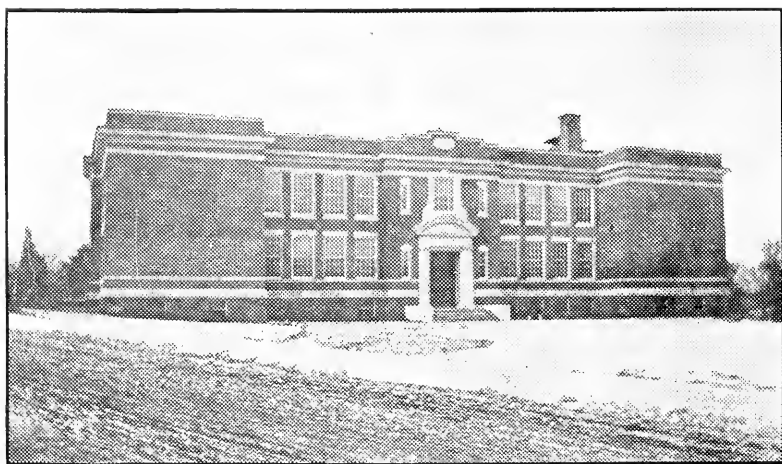
On the 11th day of the following month he died, aged 84 years. His wife, Jane, died in Milton, 1675.

"Robert Vose lived here through a long life, respected and honored by his fellow-citizens, and came to his grave 'in a full age like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.'" It is to be regretted that no stone marks his resting place in the old Vose lot in Milton cemetery.

With commendable civic pride Milton has perpetuated the names of several of her early settlers in her public school buildings. The Vose school house with its broad outlook over the wide territory of Robert Vose's homestead, furnishes a fitting memorial to one of the founders of the town and his numerous worthy descendants.

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THE VOSE SCHOOLHOUSE.

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