Early History of the New Hampshire Settlements
The narration of a video prepared
by Alice Haubrich (1905-2005)
Curator of the Piscataqua Pioneers, 1990

This is story about great grandfathers and grandmothers - yours and mine - in 1623 . . . and their voyages crossing from England to New England . . . to settle and build and live!

First, we need to know that the island of Monhegan, off the shores of Maine, was well known to the fisherman of England and in their day, Sir John Popham and Sir Ferdinando Gorges outfitted a ship called the "Mary and John" and sent Dr. Richard Vines and his small apprentice, fourteen-year-old David Thomson . . . son of his servant Widow Florence (Cramlon) Thomson who lived in Sir Ferdinando's home in 1607 . . . to erect a fort they called "St. Gorges" on the Kennebec River in Maine. Among those one hundred passengers, on the "Mary and John" and another fishing vessel were red-skinned Indians which Capt. George Weymouth had previously brought to England, . . . and with whom David Thomson had lived at the Plymouth Fort in England.

Although fourteen-year-old David Thomson had been taught the rudiments of building and repairing ships, this was to be his first exposure in the erection of a fort . . . and he learned his lesson well . . . but this expedition failed . . . for Capt. George Popham, President of the Colony died, and Capt. Gilbert then succeeded to the presidency - but Gilbert's older brother died in England, leaving him heir to the family estates and he was therefore required to return to England . . . and then Sir John Popham, who was the chief financial supporter of this expedition died in England.

The winter of 1607-1608 was extremely cold . . . and the storehouse and most of the provisions of these colonies burned during this winter . . . so when the fishermen came to fish in the early spring of 1608, bringing all of this discouraging news, the colonists returned to England. There, in Plymouth Fort and as protege of Sir Ferdinando Gorges as well as the apprentice of Dr. Richard Vines, David Thomson had occasion to visit the shipyard of a man called William Cole and their home presided over by his wife Agnes (Bryant) Cole and daughter Amias Cole . . . and the parish register of St. Andrews Church at Plymouth, Co. Devon, England attests to the marriage of Amias Cole to David Thomson 18 July 1613 . . . David Thomson was twenty (20) years old and Amias was not yet sixteen (16) years old . . . William Cole furnished the couple with a house built on her grandfather William Bryant's land, and in a marriage settlement dated 1 April 1615, her father, William Cole gave the house to David and Amias, who were to "pay the ground rent".

Here, Amias gave birth to four Thomson Children . . . Ann Thomson was baptized 1 Oct 1615 . . . but died soon. On 23 Oct. 1616, Priscilla Thomson was baptized, but on the previous March of 1616 her father, David Thomson had gone aboard the two hundred (200) ton ship "Abraham" with Capt. Abraham Jennings on a fishing expedition, along with his former teacher Dr. Richard Vines, who had certified him as an "apothecary". They reached Monhegan Island a month later, and here, Dr. Richard Vines and David
Thomson and four other men in Sir Ferdinando Gorges employ outfitted a shallop and struck out for the abandoned "Fort Gorges" . . . The 1607/8 settlement on the Kennebec River in Maine.

That winter, they traded with Indians for furs and gathered sassafras and loaded the dried fish from the fall fishing season onto the ship "Abraham" which Capt. Jennings had returned in for the spring fishing season . . . and at the end of May 1617 at Monhegan Island they set out for the return to England, reaching Plymouth in early July of 1617 . . . so little Priscilla Thomson was eight (8) months old when she first saw her father!

After this visit to New England, David Thomson revealed to Sir Ferdinando Gorges his desire to receive a patent to allow him to settle on the "Piscataqua River" . . . and reading Capt. John Smith's "description of New England" which had been published in 1616 at London only added fire to his ambition to settle permanently in New England. In January of 1619, his son, John Thomson was born, and in the spring of 1619, David Thomson sailed with Capt. Thomas Dermer and the Indian "Squanto" . . . and on this trip they examined the New Hampshire-Maine river the Indians called "Piscataqua", and the Isles of Shoals . . . and rescued an Indian boy stranded on one of the shoals islands and returned him to his mainland tribe. Four and one half years later, the Sagamore of this tribe gave this Indian lad to David Thomson . . . and he was called "Watt Tylor".

At the end of July, 1619 the ship "Abraham" returned to Plymouth, England with its cargo of fish, furs and sassafras and during 1619 and 1620 David Thomson became acquainted with the merchants Thomas and Nicholas Sherwill, Leonard Pomeroy, Abraham Colmer and Thomas Ceeley and the father and sons of John Jopes, John Clements and Robert Trelawney . . . urging them to exploit the Isles of Shoals as a fishing center instead of Monhegan . . . explaining to them the advantages of a crew living on shore in New England fishing both spring and fall . . . at a shore base . . . and so it was that the groundwork for profit-sharing with these English merchants was established and on 26 Aug 1620, two ships, Capt. Christopher Jones ship "Mayflower" and Capt. Reynold's ship "Speedwell" arrived at Plymouth, seeking assistance from Grandfather William Cole, to repair the leaking ship "Speedwell". They tarried there for twelve days . . . the passengers living ashore at the orphan's aid workhouse, which William Cole had helped to build. Amias Thomson was pregnant again and visited with the women of this pilgrim group, while the menfolk met with David Thomson to find out more about the New England, which they had set out for until "Speedwell" began to leak. Governor William Bradford's journal tells us of this episode . . . and how the ship "Mayflower" struggled alone to New England.

When Sir Ferdinando Gorges charter for the Council of New England passed the seals 3 Nov 1620 . . . He was well prepared for the upcoming adventure to New England. Amias Thomson's child, Ann Thomson was born and baptized 22 Nov 1620 . . . but she died on the 26th of November 1620. Sir Ferdinando Gorges wife, Lady Ann Gorges died in August of 1620 . . . and Sir Ferdinando Gorges gave instructions to David Thomson to board the ship "Jonathan" with a recruited construction crew to sail to New England.
Later in December of 1620 . . . they crossed the ocean in eight (8) weeks time and arrived at the Isles of Shoals . . . then sailed into the mouth of the Piscataqua River . . . to land at what has since been called "Odiorne's Point", and there they built the structure known as "Pannaway". The fall fishing crew wintered there and by 1622 David Thomson was again in London, reporting to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, and the ordnance for this Pannaway Fort was brought across the sea by Thomas Weston on his ship "Charity" in 1622 and installed. In the spring of 1623, David Thomson brought over to New England his wife, Amias and his son John and their servants to live at Pannaway. Priscilla remained with her grandparents.

Here . . . at Odiorne's Point in Rye, New Hampshire, we still find the remains of that early "Fort Pannaway" . . . and the unmarked grave sites of those early settlers and fishermen. David Thomson's indenture for five (5) years with the Plymouth merchants Abraham Colmer, Nicholas Sherwill and Leonard Pomeroy is still to be seen at the N.H. Historical Society Building at Concord, NH. David Thomson honored his five-year indenture . . . furnishing fish and furs to the Plymouth merchants . . . and in 1624 and 1625 helping Samuel Maverick to build his house on Noddles Island and fortify it with four cannons in 1625 . . . at the time that Governor Robert Gorges, younger son of Sir Ferdinando Gorges arrived in New England and settled at Massachusetts Bay, along with William Jeffrey, John Bursleum, William Blackstone, John Balch and Thomas Walford . . . some with family and servants.

David Thomson built his home on Thomson's island in Boston Bay in 1625, but did not move his family there until 1626. In early June of 1628, David Thomson died. Widow Amias (Cole) Thomson married (2) Samuel Maverick and went with her son, John to live at "Noddles Island". Samuel Maverick and Amias (Cole)(Thomson) were parents of three Maverick children: Nathaniel, Samuel and Mary, and after Samuel Maverick received a grant of land at New Amsterdam (Manhattan, New York) they moved there to live on Lower Broadway, where they died in 1670.

Meantime . . . further up the river Piscataqua at a location called "Dover Point" . . . a settlement had been started in 1623 by the Edward Hilton, member of the fisherman's guild in England. . . and one of David Thomson's compatriots after his admission to the Fishmonger's Guild, 9 April 1621 . . . an apprentice of Marie Hilton . . . at London, England. Edward Hilton was baptized at Northwich, Chester County, England at Witton Chapelry on 9 Jun. 1596, the son of William Hilton . . . and he had a brother William Hilton, who, with his wife and three children arrived on the ship "Fortune" with Capt. William Trevoere, at Plymouth Plantation . . . the youngest child baptized by the Rev. John Lyford there in 1624 . . . but they sought out the services of David Thomson at Boston Bay to transport them to the Piscataqua river settlement of Edward Hilton . . . and they settled first at land on the Maine side of the river across from Edward Hilton's settlement on Dover Point . . . later removing to Kittery, Maine and later still to land on the York River in York, Maine.

Edward Hilton had received his patent to this land . . . and received livery of seisin of his Swampscot patent, 12 Mar., 1629/30. However, he was in control at Dover Point, 4 Dec.
1632, when Governor Winthrop Received a letter from Captain Neale and William Hilton that they had sent four (4) vessels and forty (40) men to protect Pemaquid from Dixie Bull . . . and did not remove to live at "Newfields" (a part of Exeter, NH) until he had sold this Dover Point Patent to the Bristol Men . . . who sold it to the Lords Say and Brooke . . . and they sold to the men of Shrewsbury . . . and Governor Thomas Wiggin had been sent to govern the Dover land.

With Edward Hilton had come Thomas Roberts, who married Edward Hilton's daughter Rebecca. Thomas Roberts remained at Dover Point with Rebecca . . . and is buried there . . . Edward Hilton and his family were buried at Newfield, NH . . . a site which was marked by the "Piscataqua Pioneers" after sufficient excavation to locate the old homestead on August 31, 1933. In 1630, two ships the "Warwick" and the "Pied Cow" brought Capt. Walter Neale as a Governor and the factor for Capt. John Mason, Ambrose Gibbons with various servants in the employ of Capt. John Mason of Portsmouth, England . . . a member of the Council for New England. These men were indentured to work for five (5) years to settle and improve the land . . . and were all free of this indenture in 1635 when Capt. John Mason died in England . . . at which time they all sought land grants from the Indian Sagamore . . . and settled in various locations both in Maine and New Hampshire . . . The original settlement at "Newichawannock" (South Berwick, ME) was built and fortified with a palisade and was used as a "trading post" until it burned . . . and nothing remains of this settlement except the site of the old "well" which Ambrose Gibbons dug to accommodate the Newichawannock settlers. After his indenture was served, Ambrose Gibbons removed to live at Dover Point . . . and finally to a site on Great Bay . . . within the township of Oyster River (now Durham, NH) . . . where his wife "Bess" died and where he himself died the following year 11 Jul. 1656 . . . leaving a Will . . . which identified the children of their only daughter and child, Rebeckah Gibbons Sherburne, wife of the emigrant, Henry Shelburne of Portsmouth, New Hampshire . . . .

Descendants of these early settlers banded into an association known today as "The Piscataqua Pioneers" on June 6, 1905 at Portsmouth, NH . . . and it is interesting to note that the five corporators or their children were all blood descendants of Ambrose Gibbons, Factor for Captain John Mason's settlements in Maine and New Hampshire. These corporators were:

Thomas M. Jackson 1 Summer Street, Portsmouth, NH
Albert H. Lamson Box 51, Elkins, NH
John M. Moses Strafford, NH
Henry W. Fernald M.D.D. Post Office Boston, MA
Moses A. Safford Kittery, ME

Letters . . . diaries . . . deeds . . . wills . . . birth marriage and death records . . . were kept as well as was possible under difficult circumstances during the early settlement years . . . and from depositions taken during court procedures, etc. we are able to reconstruct the bloodlines of generations of descendants of the early settlers . . . some encompassing fourteen generations by the time of a 375th (three hundred seventy-fifth) anniversary in 1998 . . . . (1623-1998)
We are fortunate that throughout the years members of our various families . . .
grandfathers whom we revere . . . have spawned offspring who saw fit to author family
histories . . . and town histories . . . which all help us to remember and revere these early
grandfathers and grandmothers . . . down through the years . . . some aspired to govern . . .
some aspired to great things both here on earth and into outer space . . . and the world is
the better for their having lived . . .

Particularly helpful in the search for the early "roots" of our heritage is the book called
"Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire" by Libby/Noyes/Davis for therein may be
found the listing of the names of these early settlers with several generations of their
families . . . a point of beginning.

Let us hope that those Piscataqua Pioneers will forever be kept in memory.

Alice Clark Haubrich Curator The Piscataqua Pioneers

This "Commentary" was published in The Genealogical Record, Vol.13, No.3, May/June 1990, a
publication of The Strafford County Genealogical Society, P.O Box 322, Dover, NH 03820.