

**HISTORICAL NOTES  
RELATING TO  
THE SECOND SETTLEMENT  
OF WORCESTER**

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Historical notes relating to the second settlement of Worcester by Lincoln N. Kinnicutt

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**LINCOLN N. KINNICUTT**

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American Antiquarian Society

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Historical Notes Relating to  
the Second Settlement  
of Worcester

BY

LINCOLN N. KINNICUTT

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## HISTORICAL NOTES RELATING TO THE SECOND SETTLEMENT OF WORCESTER

BY LINCOLN N. KINNICUTT

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While recognizing the wide field which is offered to the American Antiquarian Society for its research, and also recognizing that a small stream in Worcester is perhaps of comparatively little importance, nevertheless I venture to offer to the Society a very early document in relation to Mill Brook, which, in Colonial days, was sometimes called Mill River, Fort River, Swift River, Danson Brook and Bimelek. This brook and the Blackstone River (of which it is one of the sources) from the time that Worcester was known only as the Plantation of Quinsigamond, have been important factors in the city's history.

Mill Brook rises among the hills northwest of Worcester, flows through North Pond and Salisbury Pond to Lincoln Square. It then continues through the very heart of the city, east of Main Street and somewhat parallel to it. Here it is mostly covered, but on its former banks throughout its whole course, are situated most of the largest manufacturing corporations of the city.

The document is the original petition to the General Court, dated December 14, 1685 and, as stated, is signed by the "grater number of the Inhabitants now settled in the town of Woster," one year and a quarter after the second settlement of the town was begun. These signatures are historically valuable, as they give authentic proof of actual settlers at this date, and if the statement therein contained was true, it

places the whole number of settlers at less than twenty. With its quaint orthography and remarkable spelling, it is a little difficult to translate into modern English, but it reads as follows:

“Woster this 14 of desember 1685

“Wee whos nams are vnder Reten being the gratest number of the Inhabetanc now setelled in the town of woster haueing consedered And ben Ey witness of the grat expenc that mr John wing has ben At in belding hes mills which is moch for oure benefet And convenienc And of letell profet to him nor lik to be yet Awhill: as Allso his hellfullnes in oure poglek Concernments And forderanc of the setellmet of this town: we doe Approve of his Choyc of that trak of land lying from [ ] Corner of the setedell And wheare it dos begin And Runn up on the westery sid of the mill rever tel it met the north pond tho this being more then his forst devisiion yet that he oft in All Justes to poses the remainder As his acome [ ] that he may haue all the land on that sid of the brok as his propriety that no persen may dam About him to hender his mills: as Allso wee farder lok At it to be his right for As moch As seauer[al] of vs doe know that Captain Hinkeman did promis this Lokt of land to said wing a year and [ ] before Euer gurg dansen saw this pl[ ] of that land as Allso be[cause] som of vs woled [ ] som of oure deuitions of lan d theare but Cap- tain bin[kc]man tould vs that we colld not for he had promes that land to Cap wing And we haue Euer cenc loked At it to be his only thet it was not mesered to him but we loked it sholdd haue ben don in convenient tim it is oure desires that such uncomfortabell dife[rnces] may be put to An End And that this land may be setelled vpon Cap wing youres in all sobiecktion

|                  |                           |                  |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| “William x Wekes | Isaac Tomlin              | Thomas Hall      |
| his mark         | Gorgs Rosbrowgh           | Pe. Goulding Sen |
| Thomas Allerton  | William <sup>h</sup> pers | Digory Sargent   |
| Isaac Bull       | his mark”                 |                  |
| James homes      |                           |                  |

The name of William Pers does not elsewhere appear among the lists of inhabitants.

The most important signature is that of Digory Sargent, whose name is perhaps more closely associated with the early history of Worcester, with the exception of the founders, than any other. His story has been told many times. Although the name

has been given by almost all writers as "Serjent," and it is so written in his will dated March 17, 1696,<sup>1</sup> we find here his earliest known signature written "Sargent." He was the last inhabitant to desert the second attempt to form a settlement and he was obliged to, when he was killed and scalped by the Indians in 1703.

This petition had much weight in the first law-suit pertaining to this stream—Danson vs. Wing in 1685, and both stream and law-suits have flowed along together ever since, blessed by the lawyers and damned by the mill owners.

In following the course of this trial we find pertaining to it the names of three men all of whom filled positions of trust and honor in the Colony: Major General Gookin, called the Father of Worcester, Captain Daniel Henchman and Captain John Wing, both of whom were valuable assistants to Major Gookin in the early work of the settlement of the town, each in his turn taking the leadership and general direction of the second attempt at settlement, until its abandonment in 1703.

The whole story of the Mill Brook dispute is contained in a paper read before the Worcester Society of Antiquity, May 6, 1884, by Francis E. Blake, and is included in their Proceedings. A short synopsis is as follows: In October, 1684, Captain John Wing was appointed a member of the Committee having charge of the Plantation of Quinsigamond—six days afterwards the General Court granted the petition for having the Plantation named Worcester. In a general agreement by the committee, April 24, 1684, three lots were to be granted to "The builders and mainteyners of a Sawmilne" and a like number for "a grist milne."<sup>2</sup> On May 22, 1685, John Wing was granted ten eighteen acre lots, six of which were for

<sup>1</sup> Lincoln's History of Worcester, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Proprietors' Records, p. 38.



his mills; also eighteen hut lots "upon part whereof his dwelling house and barne now standeth," and additional land was also granted to him on Mill Brook "with the privilege of the Mill Brooke only to him and to his heirs."<sup>3</sup> All this land with all the privileges was confirmed July 9, 1686. The confirmation reads as follows:

"All the Grants aboue expesed are confirmed to Capt John Wing & his heirs and assignes forr euerr; By the Comitte of the Honble Presedent & Council impowred thervnto by this order dated June 11 1686 don at the meeting of Said Comitte at Boston July 9th 1686 & Signed by

DANIEL GOOKIN Sen  
 THOMAS PRENTICE  
 WILLIAM BOND  
 JOSEPH LYND &  
 JOHN HAYNES. (9)

These grants were surveyed in November, 1714, by David Haynes, a report made and a plan drawn showing this part of Captain John Wing's land on Mill Brook.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after this grant to Captain John Wing there was granted to George Danson of Boston, a baker, two hundred acres of land bounded on the east by Mill Brook and on the South by Captain John Wing's land, and a little later Danson was granted forty acres more adjoining the first grant.<sup>5</sup> This was the beginning of the trouble, for Captain John Wing wanted the remainder of the land on Mill Brook, and from much evidence given at the trial it would seem that Captain Daniel Henchman had given him some right to expect that he would have it.

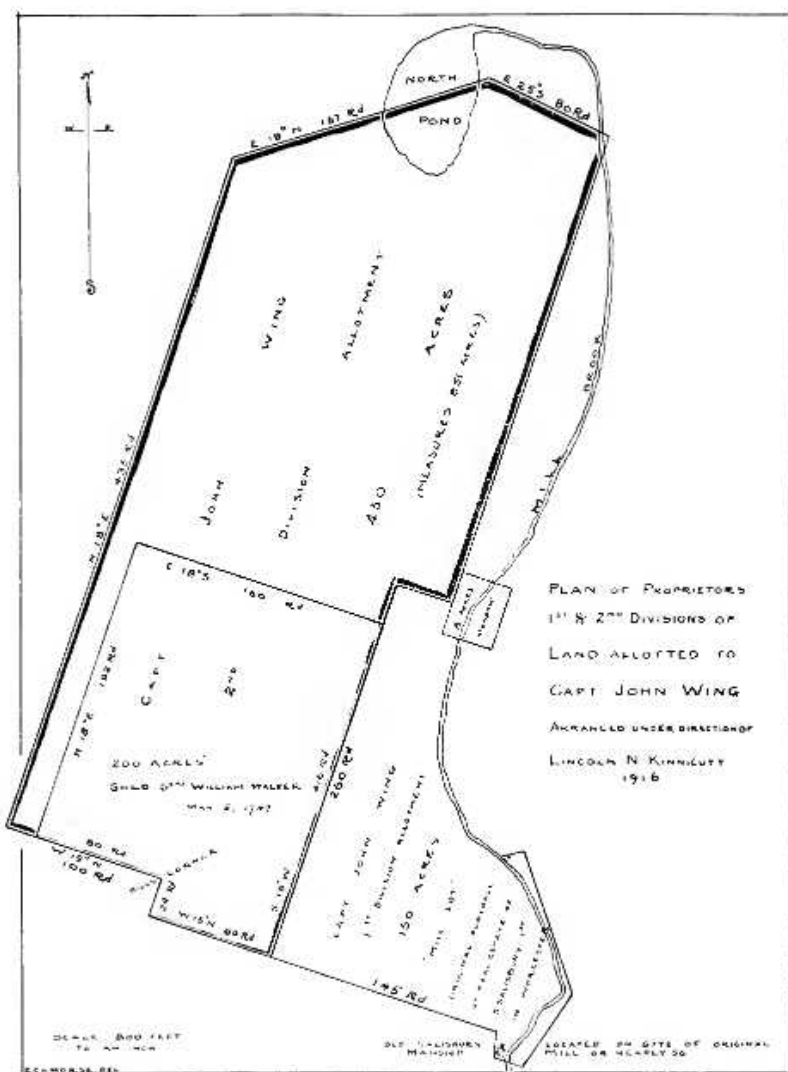
October 2, 1685, while George Danson was surveying his first grant, he claimed that he was assaulted by Captain John Wing and "confederators," the

<sup>3</sup> Proprietors' Records, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Proprietors' Records, p. 43-44.

<sup>5</sup> Proprietors' Records, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Proprietors' Records, p. 44.



PLAN OF PROPRIETORS  
 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> DIVISIONS OF  
 LAND ALLOTTED TO  
 CAPT JOHN WING  
 ARRANGED UNDER DIRECTION OF  
 LINCOLN N. KINNIFITT  
 1916

SCALE 200 FEET TO AN INCH  
RECORDS, ETC.

SEE LINDSEY MAPSHEET

LOCATED ON SITE OF ORIGINAL MILL OR NEARLY SO

PLAN OF WILLIAM WALKER ESTATE  
 SHOWING PRESENT LOCATION OF  
 AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY  
 ARRANGED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF  
 LINCOLN N. KINNIEUTT. 1916

