

**SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF
THE
HONORABLE JOHN READ,
OF BOSTON, 1722- 1749**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649240302

Sketch of the Life of the Honorable John Read, of Boston, 1722- 1749 by George B. Reed

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

GEORGE B. REED

**SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF
THE
HONORABLE JOHN READ,
OF BOSTON, 1722- 1749**

m 1)

*John, N. Arnold Esq.^r
with the Compliments
of the Author.*

SKETCH

l + ark

13

OF THE LIFE

OF THE

HONORABLE JOHN READ,

OF BOSTON,

1722-1749.

By GEORGE B. REED.

BOSTON:
PRIVATELY PRINTED.

1903.

*U15
908
REA/R*

1006

R 283

REPRINTED FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF
THE BOSTONIAN SOCIETY FOR 1903.



Rec. May 8, 1903.

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION.

"A great Judge lives in his recorded opinions, but a great Lawyer, a brilliant Advocate, lives only in memory and tradition, and soon becomes little more than a shining name."

LIFE AND ACTIVITIES
OF THE
HON. JOHN READ OF BOSTON.

THE Honorable John Read, a distinguished lawyer and citizen of Boston in provincial days, 1722-1749, "had as great a genius," said President John Adams, "and became as eminent as any man," and he prefaced his remark with this saying of Mr. Read's: "My knowledge of the law cost me seven years' hard study in that great chair."

It is my purpose in this paper to speak of Mr. Read more particularly as a lawyer and of his career as such, premising that what I have to say must necessarily be fragmentary, for but little relating to his activities has come down to us through the hundred and fifty years since his death. He was a native of Fairfield, Connecticut, born January 29th, 1679, the son of William Read of that town and grandson of William Read, an early settler of Stratford, afterwards of Norwalk; both were men of property and distinction; his mother (Deborah) was a daughter of Nathaniel Baldwin of Fairfield, "ancestor of an eminent and highly honored family." In the year 1692 he entered Harvard College and also his 'teens, and graduated in 1697, seventh in a class of fourteen. For the information of College "boys," I would say that nothing has come down to us of his college career save what appears in the following paraphrase of the first verse of the Psalms, repeated *extern-*

poore by a sedate fellow-student on leaving a classmate's room after "picking himself up" from the floor amid the wreck of the chair in which, on entering, he was invited to sit : *

"Blest is the man who hath not lent
To wicked Read his ear,
Nor spent his life as Collins hath,
Nor sat in Southmayd's chair."

On leaving College Mr. Read turned his attention to the ministry, the only field of activity, influence and usefulness for educated men in those days; and after some months' preparation and at the age of eighteen years, entered upon his labors in that calling, preaching first at Waterbury, Connecticut, then at East Hartford for a time, and about three years at Stratford, when he began the study of the law, which at that time, as a science, was in its infancy, so to speak, in this country; courts having been established (under the Provincial Charter) but a few years before, in 1692.

What led him to enter upon the study of the law is not now known. It may have been owing to, or have grown out of, the contentions which he and his friends and associates of Stratford had with parties from Old Milford for lands including the rich intervalles on the Housatonic River in New Milford. It appears that, after he had obtained titles to these lands given many years before by the Indians, which titles had been received under a permit from the General Court in 1670, with no restrictions or conditions, a patent was given by the General Assembly in 1703, covering the same lands, to parties from Old Milford who brought suits of ejectment. Mr. Read acted as attorney for himself in defence; and in a petition to the General Assembly he says that, after gaining his case in court fifteen times, he lost it on the sixteenth.

As this petition is interesting personally and historically, and withal unique of its kind, I give it quite in full; it was

* Anecdote of Rev. Hugh Adams in Farmer and Moore's Hist. Coll. of N. H., Vol. 2.

addressed to the General Assembly sitting at New Haven in 1710:

May it please the Honorable Court: Misfortunes in my adventures have undone me utterly, for as I thought with a prudent foresight I purchased about twenty thousand acres of lands in Wiantinock [New Milford and vicinity], parcel of a purchase of thirty nine, recorded in May last; had spent much to settle and defend it; settled some inhabitants with me yr afterwards, tried ye title and defended it against home pretenders. Sixteen times have I been to Court about it, ever gaining till ye last Courts Assistants wherein I finally lost; and am utterly discouraged and broken—finding two things, 1st that I am not able to maintain suits forever, and that Indian titles are grown into utter contempt, which things make me weary of the world. Wherefore I pray, seeing I nor my father have had not one foot of land by division or grant of town or county, tho' spending all our days in it, that I may have liberty if I can find a place in ye colony (whch I know not yet of) not granted to nor purchased by any; y't by your allowance I may settle it with some others of my friends, where in obscurity we may get a poor living, and pray for your health and prosperity with great content.

"This Indian deed to Mr. Read," says Mr. Orcutt in his excellent History of New Milford, "had stood on the records, sanctioned by a court decision, more than thirty years, when the General Assembly gave the permit to the Old Milford Company, and the deed was received upon the specific conditions that the plantation should interfere with no other titles."

It appears from records that Mr. Read was duly granted lands in and about what is now New Fairfield, bordering on the Province of New York, but, not choosing it as a place of residence, he located within the bounds of the present town of Reading, in that part of it then and now called Lonetown, a very pleasant locality, where he erected a manor-house, naming the estate "Manor of Lonetown." "Here," says the late Lawyer Beers of Fairfield, in his Address on Mr. Read,