

**CENTENNIAL  
CELEBRATION AT  
BRAINTREE,  
MASS., JULY 4, 1876**

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Centennial Celebration at Braintree, Mass., July 4, 1876 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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*PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE TOWN.*

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## ORATION BY HON. F. A. HOBART.

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AN American in a foreign land, speaking of his own country, would naturally dwell upon its national aspects, its history as a whole, its marvellous resources, extended domain, considering those masculine traits that suggest and reveal force, renown, and results. Upon American soil the same individual will turn with warmer and tenderer emotions to the "spot of his origin," and will be drawn by ties of affection to his home, to the town of his nativity, regarding all that concerns it with minute and special interest.

With such filial regard and affection let us recite, on this glorious anniversary, the story of the birth and growth of our venerable mother town. Tracing back this interesting narrative for two hundred and thirty-six years, we shall find,

"A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into our memory,  
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dre,  
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names  
On sands, and stones, and desert wilderness."

That vast scheme of colonization, comprehended and advocated by Bacon,<sup>1</sup> and instituted by Raleigh<sup>2</sup> with all the brilliance of romance in behalf of the Crown of England, had seized upon the main estuaries of the Atlantic shore between the French occupation of the Saint Lawrence<sup>3</sup> in the north, and the lordly Mississippi in the south,—the discovery of which had proved both the glory and the grave

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 14.

of the Spaniard, De Soto;<sup>1</sup> the Roanoke, Susquehanna, and Delaware had been explored; the James, Piscataqua, and Saco had undergone experiments at settlement; native chiefs had parleyed with Hudson on the North River, and that majestic stream had been opened to Dutch traffic. That wonderful traveller, whose adventures read like a tale of the Arabian Nights, had sailed this coast from Wessagusset to the Merrimack, and as Whittier, referring to Smith's visit to Cape Ann, informs us, —

“ On yonder rocky cape, which braves  
The stormy challenge of the waves,  
Mid tangled vines and dwarfed wood,  
The hardy Anglo-Saxon stood ”;

giving in 1614 to this rugged land the name it bears to-day, and to knowledge the first rude map of New England.<sup>2</sup>

These events had transpired, and the Pilgrims had for ten years lived under that governmental contract conceived on the deck of the “Mayflower,” to afterwards become the charter and covenant of an empire, before the occurrence of that immediate emigration which preceded the advent of this town. And here it is but just to say that the ground of earlier incident and preparation, for the maturing of this ancient town, has been already traversed by diligent students, accomplished scholars, and eloquent orators, and our task to-day is simply to glean from a well-garnered harvest.<sup>3</sup>

Before the English emigration of 1630, plantations were scattered over the lands in Massachusetts Bay, then counted “the paradise of New England.”

Maverick was at East Boston, Thompson occupied an island off Squantum Neck, Blackstone was on the peninsula,<sup>4</sup> and Capt. Wollaston, in search of commercial advantages,

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> See 3d, 4th, 7th, and 8th chaps. Bancroft's Cen. Edition, History of the United States, with reference to early settlements by the English.

<sup>3</sup> Whitney's notes upon Quincy, Lunt's Second Century Sermons, C. F. Adams's Town Hall Oration, at Braintree, in text, notes, and appendix, are very thorough upon certain points of our preliminary history.

<sup>4</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 266.



rested in this distinct locality a short time previous to his departure for Virginia.

Stepping into his vacant place, and making the first permanent settlement in Massachusetts, after Plymouth, we have Thomas Morton,<sup>1</sup> of somewhat unpleasant reputation, who caused the primary memories of our vicinity to be somewhat conspicuous for ribaldry and disorder.

This frolicsome gentleman, on the very outpost of our civilization, was addicted to contraband trade and much intercourse with the "brew of Soma," and by his bacchanalian orgies, interspersed with aboriginal variations, he earned an unenviable notoriety.

One of the rhymes of the "Wayside Inn" speaks of Sir Christopher, "Knight of the Holy Sepulchre," who wore, in the streets of Boston, —

"Doublet and hose and boots complete,  
Prince Rupert's hat and ostrich plume,"

passing his leisure hours with "roystering Morton, of Merry Mount," but who was afterwards "extradited" for his immoralities, proving, if the poet Longfellow is correct,

"The first who furnished this barren land  
With apples of Sodom and ropes of sand"

It must be admitted that our earliest landed proprietor, selling gunpowder and rum, and carousing with "ye savages," was of that order of citizen thought proper in these days "to send to the rear,"<sup>2</sup> and so Morton, very consistently, was ordered to be "put in the billows" and sent to England.

It seems somewhat singular that this quiet, respectable, and sedate town, for more than two centuries pursuing a calm life of sobriety and integrity, should have been antedated by a loose, lawless, and reckless barrister, and a cavalier who was a Jesuit in disguise, — men who, in their conduct and opinions, were guilty of everything obnoxious

<sup>1</sup> See Whitney's Quincy; New England Memorial, pp. 136-138; Hutchinson's History, Vol. I, p. 32; also, C. F. Adams, Jr.'s, address at 250th anniversary of settlement of Weymouth, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Hon. C. F. Adams refers to Morton as a "carpet-bagger."

to the devout settler, who came here out of hatred to prelacy and the manners of the court.

Wollaston, not finding this point, as a "trading post," quite as profitable and successful as such affairs have proved on the frontiers in our times, left for richer pastures, his name, however, adhering to this range of land.

The attempt to change the name to "Merry Mount," though signalized with unbecoming revel, was futile, as was also the short-lived effort of Endicott to call the place "Mount Dagon," when, in Christian wrath, he cut down the offensive May-pole which stood on the particular elevation known from 1625 to this hour as "Mount Wollaston."

The first decade of the Massachusetts Colony developed great activity and progress, while it exhibited serious differences in material, and grave dissensions in spiritual affairs.

The year 1628 found Salem struggling for existence, with Endicott as its central figure. Two years later Winthrop and Dudley sailed into waters, since made famous as a harbor of great maritime importance, having with them seven hundred associates.

Dispersion soon colonized Lynn, Malden, Charlestown, and Boston. Pyncheon and Eliot located at Roxbury; Hooker, the "Light of the Western Churches," as history delights to call him, halted at Cambridge before he felt called upon "to go west" as far as Connecticut; Salstonhall and Phillips advanced to Watertown; Ludlow planted at Dorchester, and according to Hubbard, twenty considerable towns were built and peopled shortly after 1630.<sup>1</sup> The General Court had commenced its sessions, and the elders and church began that authority which for a century ruled the New World, as absolutely as crown and Parliament did the Old.<sup>2</sup>

An attempt on the part of the magistrates to check excessive attendance on lectures and sermons, as injurious to the public "by a consumption of time," was suppressed by the

<sup>1</sup> Baneroff's Cen. Edition, 9th chapter.

<sup>2</sup> It is one of the traditions that Blackstone left Boston, as he said, "to get away from the tyranny of the Lord's brethren," as he left England to get rid of the "Lord's Bishops."

church, though the movement seems to have accomplished its object, as I have heard of no account since then of any particular danger from inordinate church-going.

Cotton, "an acute and subtle spirit," assistant pastor of the First Church, opposing rotation in office, advocated the notion, somewhat in vogue now, that the right of an official to his place was like that of a "proprietor in a freehold."<sup>1</sup> Winthrop led the magistrates and the church party, and was vanquished by Henry Vane, the brilliant young statesman, who, acting with the freemen of Boston, precipitated the grand contest, based on the idea of the "absolute control of the majority in civil affairs." True to this promise of his youth, Vane afterwards died gloriously on the scaffold in England, a martyr to liberty.<sup>2</sup> Another prominent disturbance in the young colony, upon religious matters, had an important bearing upon the destinies of this town. What may very properly be called the first or the original "Woman's Club," so far as this hemisphere is concerned, was held in Boston in 1636 or thereabouts, at the house of Mrs. Hutchinson,<sup>3</sup> and *there* was nestled and nurtured that heated controversy called by its advocates "the conflict of faith against works," but stigmatized by its adversaries as the "antinomian heresy," and honored by the historian Bancroft<sup>4</sup> as being the legitimate fruit of the Protestant idea, and a bold vindication of "the right of private judgment." This division of sentiment led to the assignment of Rev. John Wheelwright to preach at "the church to be gathered at Mount Wollaston" in 1636, the territory having been annexed to Boston in 1634.<sup>5</sup> Having, a year after his set-

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> The male members of the church of Boston had been accustomed to convene in order to report and debate on the discourses delivered on Sundays. Mrs. Hutchinson, a very extraordinary woman, established a similar meeting for her own sex. See Hannah Adams's History of New England, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Bancroft's Cen. Edition, Vol. I, p. 297. Also, for the most correct idea of this important controversy, which did so much towards the formation of Braintree, read the address of Hon. C. F. Adams, at dedication of Braintree Town Hall, in 1858.

<sup>5</sup> See Hancock's Cen. Sermon. Also, Hannah Adams's History of New England.