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THE DESCENDANTS OF PETER HILL OF YORK CO., ME.,

With some Incidents relating to the French and Indian Wars,—gleaned from old Manuscripts of the time.

[BY USHER PARSONS.]

PETER HILL, a planter, was a member of the Assembly of Liconia or Ligonion in 1648. He probably settled in Biddeford, near the mouth of Saco river, a few years previous to this date, with his son Roger, who was admitted a freeman in 1653. New Hampshire, having sought admission into Massachusetts, was soon followed by the settlers of York County, who had become weary of the government of Thomas Gorges, and among them was Peter Hill, who applied for admission in 1652. He died in 1667.

Roger Hill, the son of Peter, married Sarah Cross of Wells, and died in 1696. Their children were Sarah, Hannah, John, Samuel, Joseph, Mercy, Benjamin, and Ebenezer. Each of these will receive brief notice, after which, our attention will be confined to the eldest son, John and his descendants. This John, whom we are to notice, settled in Saco, and after removed to South Berwick.

JOSEPH HILL resided in Wells, where he died in 1743. He married Sarah, daughter of Joseph Bowles of Welles and sister of Mary, the wife of Major Charles Frost of Kittery, who was killed by the Indians in 1697. [See his Life in Vol. 3, No. 4, in the Genealogical Journal, 1849.] Mr. Hill purchased the estate of Bowles. He had two sons, Joseph and Nathaniel, to whom he bequeathed a large estate, and among the property were several negroes. Joseph, Jr. died before his father, and left a large estate, which he ordered to remain in the Hill family, to perpetuate the name; and, if the two sons should die without issue, the real estate was to pass over to their cousins John and Elisha Hill of Berwick. He provided liberally for teaching his children, and, indeed, it may be said that all the immediate descendants of Roger Hill, were well educated for their day. The estate was administered by his son, his son-in-law, Sawyer, and his nephew, Hon. John Hill of Berwick. This Joseph Hill, senior, served as a lieutenant under his brother, Captain John, at Saco fort, and he held various offices in the town and parish, and was Collector of Customs.

SAMUEL HILL, the third son of Roger, was commander of a packet that carried supplies from Boston to the forts eastward, in the time of the Indian wars, and thus acquired the title of Captain. He was taken captive by the French and Indians about 1701, and detained some years in Canada with his wife. In 1704, Oct. 7, he writes to his brother John, from Canada:—

"Loving brother and sister,—My kind love with my wife's, hoping these few lines will find you in good health, as they leave us at this time, blessed be God for it. This is to give you to understand that we are not likely to come home until next summer, when there will be a general exchange of prisoners, and the reason of my not coming home this fall is, because our government sent no prisoners home, for those which this governor sent by Livingstone, for which there was a great deal of reason to have done, and in the mean time we remain sufferers, whereas, if the governor at Boston had sent them, I should have come home with my

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family, and a great many others, nay, in so much that if the governor of Massachusetts had but sent one man for me, this governor would have let me had my family home with me. But I desire to wait, as Job did, for my appointed time is not come. I pray give my respects to Major Hammond and wife, cousin Pearce, Charles Frost, John Frost and their wives, and to Mr. Whittemore. Brother and sister Hill, (i. e. Ebenezer and wife) desire to be remembered to you both, and all friends, desiring your prayers, and of all God's people.

Your loving brother and sister,

Samuel and Elizabeth Hill."

The Governor of Canada sent this Capt. Samuel Hill to Boston to arrange an exchange of prisoners. From Kittery he writes to John Hill, at Berwick, May 10, 1705 :—

"Loving Brother,—These are to acquaint you of my health, and to let you know I have got leave of his Excellency at Boston to go to Wells and visit my friends there. Here are Brother and Sister Storer and Brother Hill (Joseph) come from Wells yesterday, with whom I intend to go thither in their boat, and I hope to return next week. The Governor has promised that I shall continue here till the messenger returns from Canada. Your loving brother."

The following year, Jan. 13th, 1706, Samuel writes from Portsmouth, thus :—

"Loving Brother,—After my kind love to you and to your wife, praying that you would be very careful of yourself in going into the woods, for the enemy will assuredly be skulking about to take all advantages, and I am afraid they are near at hand, for they did design mischief this winter, before I came out of Canada, and people's boldness and security denote sudden destruction, therefore I pray, let not people's carelessness be your danger."

Ebenezer Hill, a younger brother, being in Canada with his wife and child at the same time, writes from Quebec, March, 1704-5, to his brother John at Berwick, expressing great discontent in Canada, adding,

"Cousin Pendleton Fletcher," meaning his sister's son at Saco, "Mary Sayer, brother Joseph's daughter, and Mary Storer of Wells, with our other friends and neighbors here, are all well, and myself, wife and child are well, and send kind love to you all, begging your prayers that God would direct, protect and keep us, and in due time deliver us.

Your loving brother and sister, Ebenezer and Abiel Hill."

BENJAMIN, the son of Roger, died in youth.

EBENEZER HILL, the fifth son, was, as may be seen above, a prisoner in Canada, and he was taken in the following manner—"Several Indians in Saco, who professed to be friendly, and were frequently in the houses of the inhabitants, called at Mr. Hill's in the usual manner one morning and partook of some food which was offered them. They left the house, but soon after returned, and, finding Mr. Hill gone, told his wife they must make her prisoner. They proceeded to plunder such articles as they could carry away, and destroyed others. When Mr. Hill returned, he found his wife secured, having her arms pinioned, and the savages employed in emptying a featherbed. He gave himself into their hands, and the Indians de-

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camped with their prisoners." They were carried to Canada, where they remained three years. Their oldest son Ebenezer was born in Canada, and was afterwards called the Frenchman. Ebenezer Hill resided at Saco, and died there in 1748, aged 69. He held many town and parish offices, and was deacon of the church. His children were Ebenezer, (born in Canada) Dorothy, Susanna, Benjamin, Lydia, Joshua, and Jeremiah. Jeremiah, the youngest, was justice of the peace, married a Miss Smith, daughter of Captain Daniel, and was father of the late Hon. Jeremiah Hill, collector of the port of Saco.

Sarah, the daughter of Roger Hill, married Pendleton Fletcher, a man of distinction in Saco. He died a prisoner in Canada, and his widow married William Priest.

Hannah, married Lieut. Joseph Storer, who was an active officer in the second Indian War in Wells, and had a garrison near the late Dr. Hemmenway's church. He was the ancestor of the Hon. Joseph, Clement and Woodbury, and of Commodore Storer, and Prof. D. H. Storer of Boston.

Mary married Daniel Littlefield, and their descendants are numerous in Wells and Kennebunk.

Leaving the other children of Roger Hill, our attention will now be directed chiefly to his oldest son, named John, and his descendants, and to the Indian war, with which his life was interwoven.

JOHN HILL was born in Saco, and there, like his brothers and sisters, received a good common-school education. In 1686 he entered into partnership with Francis Backhouse [modernized to Backus] in building a sawmill at a place called Backus's Creek, they owning equally. By the contract, Backus was to furnish timber, and Hill "to learn how to kilter the saws, and keep them in order."

In 1689 the Indian war broke out, called King William's war, which lasted nearly ten years. A military company was called into service this year, under the command of Edward Seargent, and John Hill was commissioned by Thomas Danforth its ensign. After this he was employed sometimes in scouting, but served mostly in the forts at Saco, Wells and South Berwick. In 1690 the settlement at Salmon Falls was destroyed and many killed or carried into captivity, and also the fort at Falmouth, near Portland. The neighboring garrisons drew off to Saco, and from thence the inhabitants mostly fled for protection to Wells, and among them the Hill family, where Joseph and Samuel, Hannah and Mary, with their parents, remained permanently. John, however, remained in the fort at Saco.

He had, the preceding autumn, received orders from Col. Benj. Church, the renowned Indian fighter, to scout, and "to command the twenty soldiers quartered at Saco garrison." It was ordered too, that "the 40 soldiers posted at Saco, Scarboro', and Spurwink, (Cape Elizabeth,) be in separate commands, but are to attend to the commands of Ensign John Hill, respectively, as they are concerned upon their scoutings."

Signed

"Benj. Church."

The mother of Ensign Hill probably remained in the fort with her son at Saco, as we find the following letter, written to her from Wells, the 7th of May, 1690, by her husband, Roger Hill:—

"Dear and loving wife,—These are to let you know that we are all well here, blessed be God for it, and all our children remember their duty

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to you. The Indians have killed Goodman Frost and James Littlefield, and carried away Nathaniel Frost, and burnt several houses, here in Wells, and I would have our son John Hill to hire a boat if he can, to bring you and some of our things by water, for I fear it is not safe to come by land. Son John, be as careful of your mother as possibly you can, for it is very dangerous times; the Lord only knows whether we shall ever see one another any more. Praying for your prosperity,

Your loving husband, until death,

Roger Hill.

Remember my love to son Fletcher and daughter, and all their children, and to all my neighbors in general.

Son Storer and wife remember their duty to you, and love to their brother Fletcher and all cousins, and yourself."

The following year Mr. Hill was stationed at Wells, where he received the following note from the Governor's Secretary, dated Boston :—

" Ensign Hill at Wells "

" June 4—1691

These come to accompany 35 soldiers ordered for enforcing of the garrisons at Wells, who are to be put under your conduct until Captain Convers returns, within ten days. Expecting you will carefully improve them for scouting to observe the motion of the enemy"—

On the 25th of January, 1692, the Indians surprised the town of York, killed seventy-five of the inhabitants, carried about the same number into captivity, and nearly destroyed the town. On the 10th of June following a large force of more than two hundred French and Indians made a furious attack on the garrison at Wells, commanded by Captain Convers, who, with fifteen regular soldiers, aided by a few families collected there for protection, repulsed the enemy with a heavy loss. This was considered the most brilliant achievement of the war. Cotton Mather, in his "Magnalia," describes Ensign Hill's good conduct in the fight, and of his meeting a flag of truce of the enemy to hold a parley, and of his escape from an ambush the Indians had prepared to take him. The people in the garrison, women as well as men, assisted bravely in passing cartridges and firing muskets at the enemy.

After this victory Hill was promoted to a lieutenant, and was stationed at Quampegan and Newichewannock, in South Berwick, under Major Charles Frost, who was stationed at Frost's Garrison, at Kittery, and commanded all the forts on the east side of the Pascataqua. Spies were usually sent by the Indians to reconnoitre before the enemy approached places intended for destruction, who lurked about the woods, and required a constant ward and watch. The following letter to Lieutenant Hill gives an idea of the vigilance and circumspection necessary to be observed in these trying times.

Leiut Hill

April : 2 : 1693

Last night a Little after sun sett Noah Emory was coming from Kittery to Sturgion Creke & by the waie sid herd som crackling of stickes : & herd a man whissell : upon which he stopt under a bush : and went an other waie : John Smith coming after him saw a man nere Sturgion Creke bridge who ran a waie down the creke : Smith being on horse back came to my Garison—this morning I sent out som men who saw the Indian track at the same place where Noah Emerey herd him whissell—Kepe

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out scouts about the borders of the towne: I will send out from hence:
all or souldiers at the banke are drawn of those yt belong to you are
sent up: dispose of them to such garisons at present as you thinke fit: I
have given two of them liberty to goe home for a few dayes:

In hast I Remaine yor: Lo: freind

[Superscribed]

Charles Ffrost major.

Ffor Lieut John Hill

At Newitchawoneck

Hast Post Hast

Hill's station was about five miles from Major Frost's Garrison and dwelling, where official duties required his frequent visits. A daughter of the Major, named Mary, attracted his attention, and soon after became his wife. Another daughter of Frost married Ichabod Plaisted, then in the legislature; another married Lieut. Joseph Storer of Wells.

Towards the close of April, 1693, Hill received the following letter from three of the Council in Boston:—

"Capt. John Hill"

Sir, His Excellency hath been pleased to commissionate & appoint you to take the charge of a company for their Majesty's service, and pursuant thereunto hath sent you a Commission of Captain. By virtue of a Commission and Instructions given to us by his Excellency, with the advice and consent of the Council, we have ordered Capt. Convers to erect a garrison upon Saco River, where his Excellency intends to be, to give further orders and directions about the same;—these are to order you to march, with such of your company as are suitable unto Saco, there to attend Capt. Convers's orders or such other orders as you shall receive from his Excellency Major Frost, or from us, from time to time. There are 80 men to be sent to Saco; for dispatch, in erecting 3d garrison,—fifty whereof will be drawn off with Capt. Convers, to march East, in an expedition for their Majesty's service, and then the remainder, which will be 30, together with those posted at Wells, are to be your company, yourself to keep the post at Saco and see the garrison finished. Those at Wells to be left under the conduct of your lieutenant, Jeremy Storer. Signed,

Barth^m Gedney,
Elisha Hutchinson,
John Wally."

Immediately after John Hill's arrival in Saco, his brother-in-law, Ichabod Plaisted, writes to him, June 9th, 1693, "Last night we had four persons carried away from the Garrison by the Indians, and one wounded. The place was at Sturgeon Creek, and those carried away were Nicholas Frost's wife, and two children, and the Widow Smith."

Captain Hill was married to Mary Frost, Dec. 12th, 1694. He remained in the command of Fort Mary for many years, until 1700. His commission, of the same tenor as the former one by Governor Phips, was renewed in Sept. 1696, by Lieut. Governor Stoughton. The following letter was addressed to him by his father-in-law, Major Frost, soon after the cowardly surrender by Capt. Chubb of Fort Pemaquid, on the Kennebec, and when the combined force of French and Indians had devastated the whole province of Maine, with the exception of Saco, Wells, York, and Pascataqua, and when it was feared these must soon fall.

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Wells August 13th: 1696—

Sonn Hill

I am now at Wells with twenty horse Intending to Com over to you but hereing of severall guns about yor parts I have sent over three men to know how it is with you. I have an order from the governor to assist you in drawing of: and I have an order from the Leut gouvernor to draw of & bring a waie what can be transported by Land: & to hide the rest in the ground with the great guns: but or townes are soe weake for want of men that if the enemye be about you we fere wee are to weke to com and bring you of: I was informed as I writ to you that Major Church was com to or assistants but it is not soe but tis said he is coming with three hundred men: & major Gidney with five hundred men to or assistants: or people are much troubled that yor fort should be Demolished: Capt Chubb gave up his fort without firing a gun against the Enemye. Let me here from you by the barer here of my Love to yor selfe and wife: I pray god to keepe you from the Rage of the Enemye. I Remaine
tis said six Indians
were sen here this day
Yor Loving ffather in Law
Charles Ffrost

[Superscribed]

To Capt. John Hill At Saco fort
Hast post Hast

The fort at Saco was not surrendered by Hill, although all the inhabitants of the town were driven away or killed, and many of Hill's soldiers were waylaid and murdered while venturing out of the fort.

Early this year, 1696, died Roger Hill, the father of Capt. John Hill. A division of the movable estate took place soon after, as appears by this receipt of the children.

"Wells December 18th 1696—Received of Capt. John Hill Administrator to father Hill's estate of the movables to our full satisfaction. Rec^d by us whose names are hereunder written,—Joseph Storer, Samuel Hill, Joseph Hill, David Littlefield, Pendleton Fletcher."

The real estate was divided among the children in Oct. 1702, by mutual agreement; John, the oldest son, taking a double portion, and the others all sharing equally. Previous to this, Pendleton Fletcher had died in captivity in Canada, and his widow had married William Priest, whose name appears among the signers of the agreement, and Ebenezer Hill was absent in Saco; otherwise the names were as in the former paper relating to movable estate.

The widow of Roger Hill made her home with her son John, and conveyed to him or his widow all her property at Berwick, in 1720, where she died soon after.

Captain Hill, while at Saco, acted as agent for Col. William Pepperrell, father of Sir William, in directing the building of vessels, to whom Pepperrell writes, Nov. 2, 1696—

"Sir,—With much trouble I have gotten and sent men for the sloop, and desire you to dispatch them with all speed. I think it may be safest to mast and bend her sails before you launch her. Desire you to hasten them night and day, for, sir, it will be dangerous tarrying there, and chargeable keeping the men on pay. I shall send you a barrel of rum and a barrel of molasses, and there is a cask of wine to launch her with. So with my service to yourself and good lady, your humble servant,
William Pepperrell."

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Capt. Hill received the following sad tidings of the death of his father-in-law, Major Charles Frost, dated Wells, July 10, 1697, from his brother-in-law, Joseph Storer :—

“ Brother Hill

It hath pleased god to take a way ; Major Frost—the Indens waylad him Last Sabbath day as he was cominge whom from meetting at night ; and Killed him and John Heards wife and Denes Downing ; and John Heard is wounded ; the Good Lord santifie it to us all ; it is a Great Loss to the whole Province ; and Espesely to his famyley : and Last Monday the post that Cam to Wells as they went to goe whom the Indens Killed them a bout the marked tree : namly Nicholas Smith Proper ; and Hennery Simson ; Brother mistress Frost is very full of sory ; and all her Children ; Cousen Charles and John was with there Father ; and Escaped wonderfully ; and seuerall others with them ; Capt Brekett went with som of his Company a Monday by the way of Nechewanack and I went with them —and was there at the Major's Funerall ; and I see your wife full of greef : and your Child is well ; Mrs Frost and sister & all your Brothers & sisters Remembers theire loue to you ; and Ernestly desires you to com over if you can possible without danger.

pray doe not venter In the day to Com ; Remember our Love to all our Brothers and sisters and Cousens ; and the good Lord Keepe us in these perreles times and santifie all his Awfull dispensations to us noe more at present

praying for you
your uery Louinge Brother

Wells the : 10th July 1697

Joseph Storer.”

Major John March, who succeeded to the command after Major Frost's murder, writes to Capt. Hill :—

“ Capt. John Hill

“ Wells Aug^t 3^d, 1697.

Sir,—My kind respects and service to yourself, hoping these will find you in health, as I am, blessed be God for it. Sir, I thought it good to write to let you understand I am now at Wells, and thought it convenient to inform you of my proceedings as to ordering out scouts from Wells to Saco to yourself, by reason of the inhabitants of Wells standing in much need of guards in marshes now in their hay season. I have ordered scouts to come every two days to you, but they shall come mounted and in the night, and stay with you the next day, and to return to Wells the next night. Likewise I have sent out two or three Englishmen with Lieut. Leatherby, with about 30 Indians, who have orders from myself to go out as far as Casco (Portland) and Black Point, and they are to lay out in ambuscade a week or ten days, I in hopes they will make some discovery of the enemy, or come up with them, and sir if they should have occasion for any provisions or any assistance by way of advice, pray sir supply and assist in the matter, and sir for what provisions they have, I will give you a receipt, and in so doing you will oblige

Your friend and servant to command

John March, Major.

(To be Continued.)

Mr. Lemuel Putnam Grosvenor, who died in Pomfret, Conn., on the 19th inst., has bequeathed to the Connecticut Historical Society the sword that was owned and used by General Israel Putnam during our revolutionary struggle.—*Jan. 27th*, 1858.

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