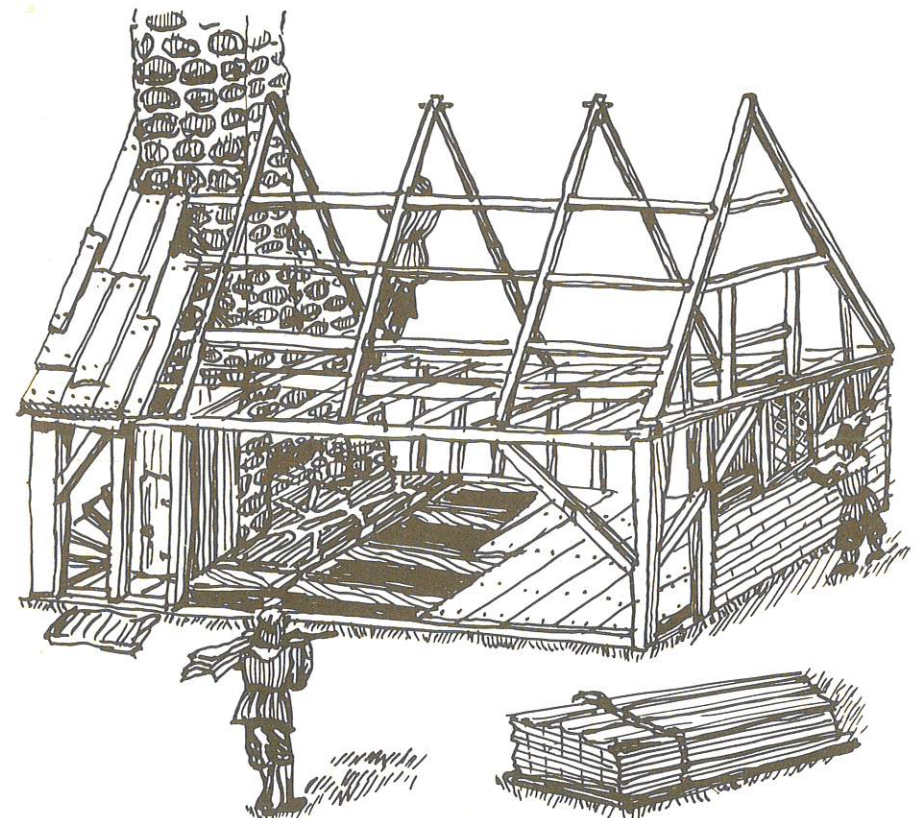


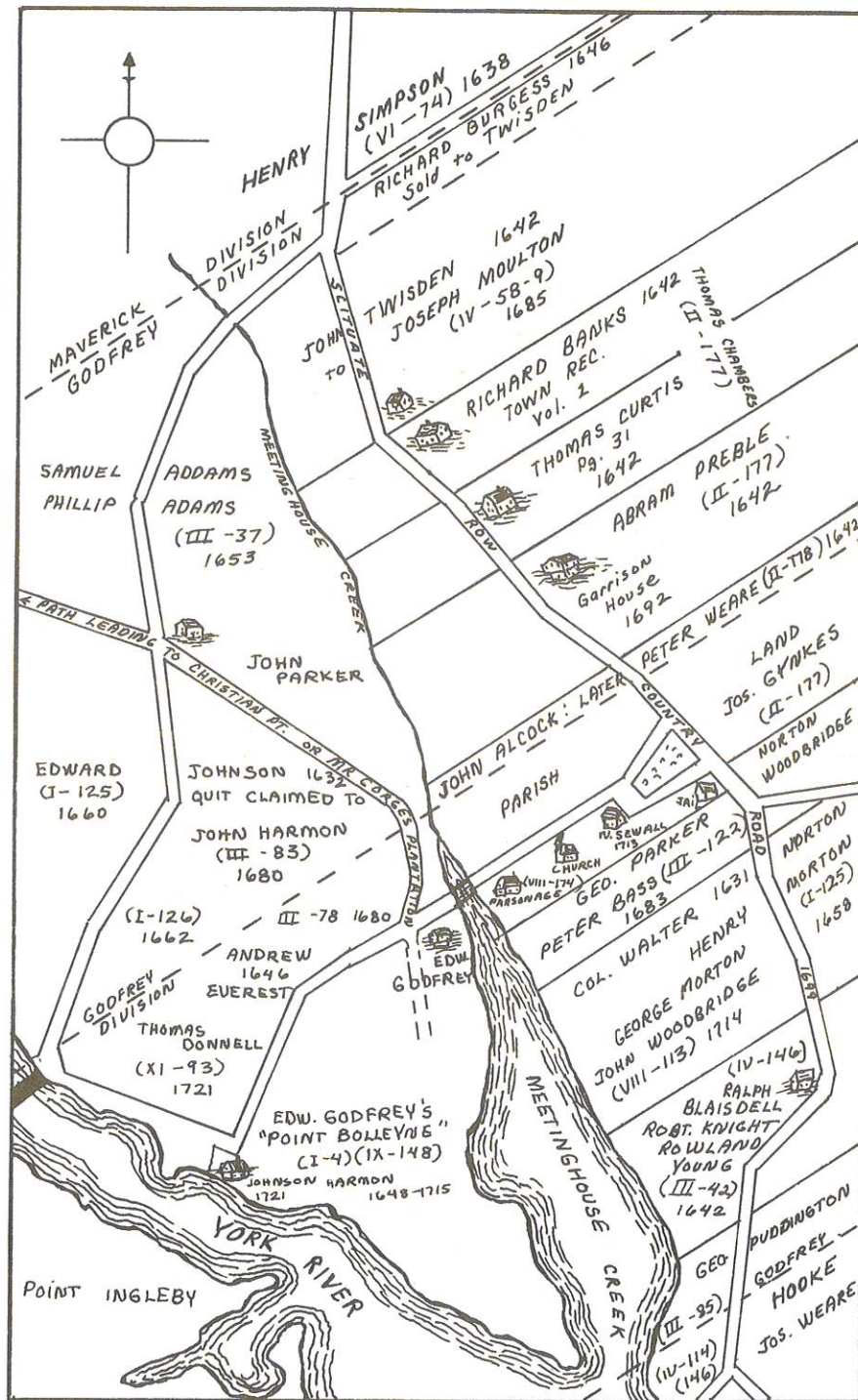
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SCITUATE MEN'S ROW

Sketches of Four Families of York



BY: JEAN TREADWELL
APRIL, 1965



MAP OF YORK VILLAGE AND VICINITY

BULLETIN NO. 4
HISTORIC LANDMARKS AWARD PROGRAM

Historic Landmarks, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of our colonial heritage. The society maintains Jefferds Tavern, the Marshall Store, the John Hancock Warehouse, the Elizabeth Perkins House, and the Old Schoolhouse as historical museums. Landmarks such as the Old Burying Ground, Maude Muller Spring and Snowshoe Rock are cared for by the Society. Funds are used to purchase books for the York Public Library, to arrange lectures on historical subjects, and to place markers in areas of historical significance.

The Award Program was planned to serve the student, the society, the school and the community by encouraging high school students to do research on problems relating to the colonial heritage of York, Maine. This paper, a product of such research, was submitted on April 28, 1965.

John D. Bardwell,
President
Society for the Preservation
of Historic Landmarks in
York County, Inc.

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1970

ARTWORK BY BARBARA MUENICH

Scituate Men's Row

In 1641, a city charter was granted by Parliament to Gorgeana, the nucleus settlement of the Gorges holdings in the province of Maine. Thomas Gorges, cousin of Ferdinando, was elected the first mayor, and his friend, Edward Godfrey, was one of the first aldermen. The new city, however small, prospered. Sir Ferdinando Gorges made plans to come to his city and assume the governorship of his lands.

In England, the strained political situation exploded into revolution. Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan leaders upset the aristocratic authority of the Cavaliers and beheaded Charles I. Subsequently, Gorges lost his power and all his properties. Immediately the Puritan colony of Massachusetts took aggressive action to bring Gorgeana and the remainder of the Maine province under its jurisdiction.

Edward Godfrey, newly elected governor over the Gorges grant, resisted the attempts of the Puritans as well as the pressures applied by several prominent citizens of Gorgeana, among them Abraham Preble and Edward Rishworth. Finally Godfrey yielded and with many citizens of the city signed the Articles of Submission¹ on November 22,



1652. In so doing, they became freemen of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Saco and other settlements to the north soon followed suit.²

Among the signers from Gorgeana, which then became York, were the following: Richard Banks, Thomas Curtis, Abraham Preble and John Twisden, Sr.³ Early in 1642, these four men had come to Gorgeana from Scituate, Massachusetts to settle on their adjoining grants of land

¹ Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, *The Trail of the Maine Pioneer*, pp. 256, 262.

² *Ibid.*, p. 256.

³ Everts and Peck, *History of York County, Maine*, p. 218.

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acquired from Edward Godfrey. They occupied a section of the city which has come to be known as Scituate Men's Row. Their lands extended from the edge of the parish lands near the present location of the York Public Library to New Town Road in the immediate vicinity of the present Hilltop Drive. Meeting House Creek and Little River formed the remaining boundaries. In the early history of the town of York, these men played notable roles, and their descendants have left lasting impressions on the town, the state, and the nation.

The Twisden Family

John Twisden (1592-1660) an emigrant originally from County Kent, England, owned a tract of land bordering Henry Simpson on the southeast, making his the last grant on the Row. In comparison to his neighbors, he was not extremely active in town affairs. In 1650 he served as a selectman, and in the same year was a member of the grand jury.¹ In 1685, his son John sold the property to Joseph Moulton. One source² states that he died in November, 1660, in York and left a wife and at least six living children. There is the equally emphatic statement that the same Twisden died in Scituate, Massachusetts, in 1680 and with no family on record.³ However, no direct descendants of the family remained in York after the Massacre of 1692, although the lineage of some women of the Bragdon and Tilden families may be traced to John Twisden of Scituate Men's Row.⁴

The son John served the community as a juror, Clerk of the Writs (1677-1681), and was a selectman eleven times between 1663 and 1684.⁵ He met a tragic end as a victim of the Massacre, with no children to carry on his lineage. Samuel, his brother, was town constable in 1660, but died with no children apparent; therefore, no one remained to carry on the name of Twisden in York.

The Curtis Family

The youngest of the men from Scituate was Thomas Curtis (1619-1660). Originally, from Ash, County Kent, England, he came to Scituate, Massachusetts with his mother and step-father Thomas Chambers. In Scituate, his sister Elizabeth Curtis was married to Richard Banks. Curtis and Banks settled on a York grant which was owned by Chambers and which adjoined Twisden on the northwest and Abraham Preble on the southeast. Whether the land was given or sold to

them by him it is not known. Curtis was a member of the grand jury many times between 1649 and 1688. In addition he served as a selectman for several years.¹ Because his name does not appear in records after the Massacre, it is assumed that he perished in the Indian attack.

Among the children of Thomas Curtis, were Joseph, who married Sarah Foxwell of Kittery and inherited part of the estate of her father. He was High Sheriff of Yorkshire when his daughter Eunice married Richard Cutts of Kittery.² The York estate was inherited by Job Curtis (1655-?). Another brother Samuel returned to Scituate and died there.³

The Banks Family

The division of the Chambers grant adjoining the Preble land was settled by Richard Banks (?-1692). Although he may have been married in England, he came to Massachusetts with no family and there married Elizabeth Curtis, as previously stated. After arriving in York, he married Elizabeth Alcock.⁴ This marriage led to his acquisition of the property in the Long Sands area, land originally part of the John Alcock estate.⁵



As a citizen of the town, Richard led an industrious life. He served as Provincial Councillor (1651-52), juror several times, town commissioner (1669, -72, -79) and a court appraiser for several years. He was appointed tax commissioner in 1652 and overseer of the county prison in 1673.⁶ Like so many of his neighbors, Banks was slain in the Massacre. There were, however, several children to carry on his name.

Lieutenant Joseph Banks (1667-1744?) was a prominent citizen and land holder. In addition to the York property, he acquired holdings in Saco and other settlements.⁷ He was Selectman in 1699 and 1702.⁸ His

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-155.

² *New England Hist. and Gen. Register*, Vol. 5., p. 345.

³ Banks, "op. cit.", p. 154.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁵ *New England Hist. and Gen. Register* Vol. 36. pp. 400-401.

⁶ Banks, C. E., *Banks Family of Maine, The*, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁸ Everts and Peck, "op. cit.", p. 224.

¹ Noyes, Sybil; et al, *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and N.H.*, p. 700. See also Banks, C. E., *History of York, Me.*, Vol. 1, p. 152.

² Banks, Charles E., *History of York, Me.*, Vol. 1, p. 152.

³ Deane, Samuel, *History of Scituate, Mass.*, pp. 350-351.

⁴ Banks, "op. cit.", p. 152.

⁵ Noyes, Sybil; et al, "op. cit.", p. 700.

brother John (1657-1723/4) served as a selectman in 1693 and other years. Samuel and Job, the other male children of Richard, did not marry and apparently perished with their father.¹

In the third generation, Moses (1690-1749), son of John resided on the family homestead. He was a lieutenant from 1722 to 1725 in Colonel Thomas Westbrook's Company.² Aaron, his brother, was a mariner and lived in York with his wife Mary Haines. His son Aaron moved to Bagaduce, Maine and died there leaving only one daughter.³ Among the children of Lt. Joseph Banks, Job (1695-1731) remained in York, but Samuel (1697-?) moved to Saco.⁴

Joshua Banks (1713-?) was the oldest son of Moses. His descendants may be traced in Nova Scotia, where he moved from York. Among his brothers, John and Zebediah lived in York but Elias was a seafarer and made his home in Scarborough. John left two daughters and Zebediah had three children, Zebediah, Jr., Zebulon and Peletiah.⁵

When the children of Richard Banks (1731-?), the great-grandson of the original Richard, left York,⁶ the remainder of the family in the town lived on the Long Sands property.

In the winter of 1794,⁷ an epidemic of smallpox broke out involving twenty-five persons residing in Scituate Men's Row. The center of infection seemed to be in the Banks house, where Martha (Banks) Hunt and Mary (Banks) Bean lived with their families. All occupants of the house developed the infection and Mrs. Bean died.

Through the generations there have been many outstanding persons in the Banks family. Tabitha Bragdon, daughter of Captain Joseph Banks,⁸ was the great-grandmother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.⁹ In 1757 there were five Banks men in the York militia: Aaron, Alcock, John, Joshua, and Josiah. Charles C. Banks (1844-1910) served his town and country during the Civil War. In 1902, Edward H. Banks was appointed Collector of Customs at Portsmouth, New Hampshire.¹⁰ There have been descendants of the family in York for three centuries. Present members occur in the Bridges and Bardwell families.¹¹

The Preble Family

Abraham Preble signed the Articles of Submission to Massachusetts, in the firm belief that the town and province should have the protection offered by the Bay Colony. As soon as he had arrived in York, he became an active participant in the affairs of the community, and was the last mayor of Gorgeana (1652).¹ Under Massachusetts rule, he became a magistrate in the Saco court (1645), Provincial Councillor (1645-1649) and an associate justice in the District Court from 1656 to his death.² He died in 1662, leaving several children. Among them was Abraham (1642-1714) one of York's most illustrious citizens.

Captain Abraham Preble was chief commander of the militia in York, served as a lot layer and surveyor for the town,³ served as a selectman for eight terms between 1674 and 1697, and was a town constable in 1672 and a town clerk several times. In 1699 he was appointed to the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, becoming the second Judge Preble. He was a member of the court until his death.⁴



As an interesting sidelight, the story of Ebenezer Preble, son of the Captain, is rich in local lore. While hunting with his friend Joseph Moody, son of the Reverend Samuel Moody, he was accidentally shot

¹ Banks, "op. cit.", p. 5.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6; also *Brook's History of Casting, Brooksville, and Penobscot*, p. 200.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Banks, C. E., *Banks Family of Me.*, p. 6.

⁶ Ernst, George, *Banks Genealogy*

⁷ Banks, C. E., *History of York, Me.*, Vol. II, p. 395.

⁸ Capt. Jos. Banks, son of Richard of Scituate.

⁹ Maine Writers Research Club, *Maine Past and Present*, p. 28.

¹⁰ Banks, *History*, Vol. II, p. 360.

¹¹ Ernst "op. cit."

¹ Banks, C. E., *History of York, Me.*, Vol. I, pp. 150-151

² Noyes, Sybil, et. al. "op. cit.", p. 565.

³ Everts and Peck "op. cit.", p. 224.

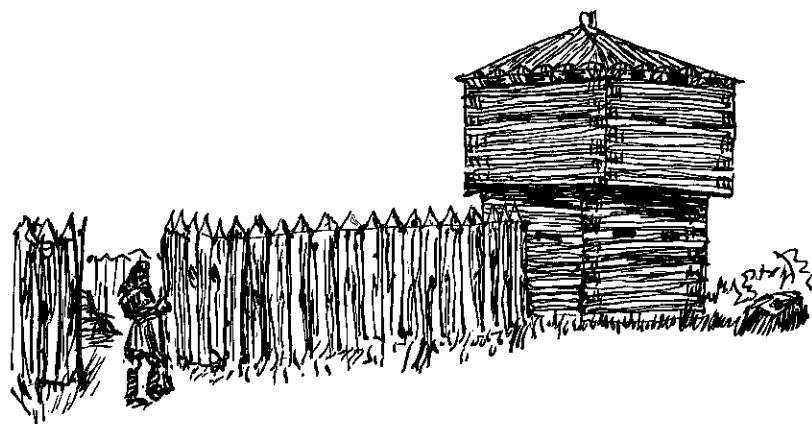
⁴ *Ibid.*

and killed by Moody.¹ In later years Joseph Moody developed such a morbidness of mind over this tragedy, and the untimely death of his wife, that he wore a handkerchief over his face in public. This incident led to the legend of "Handkerchief Moody," related in several fictional accounts such as "The Minister's Black Veil," a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It also inspired the following couplet popular among people of the time:

"Oh lamentable, lamentable,

What has become of Ebenezer Preble."²

In the same generation of Prebles was another Abraham (1675-1724), who was the son of Nathaniel and nephew of Captain Abraham Preble. He is said to have held "no less than nine offices of honor and public trust."³ Among his contributions to the town were his services as town clerk, county sheriff (1713), Register of Probate (1721-24) and his appointment to the Court of Common Pleas in 1715.⁴ This made him the third Judge Preble.



Many of the Preble men have served their town and country in the military. Jedidiah Preble, grandson of Abraham of Scituate was prominent in the French and Indian Wars and commanded the Massachusetts forces during the Revolution.¹ His son, Commodore Edward Preble, a resident of Portland, received acclaim for his exploits against the Algerian pirates at Tripoli.² He and his cousin Rear Admiral George Henry Preble gave distinguished service during the Civil War. George Preble was executive officer of the U.S.S. *Kearsage* in her historic encounter with the Confederate ship *Alabama*.³

Another exceptional member of the Preble family was William Pitt Preble (1783-1857), born in York, the son of Esaias Preble. His father had been a captain of Minutemen at Cambridge in 1775 and a ratifier of the Constitution of the State of Massachusetts. In York, Esaias served as a representative in the General Court and was a selectman on several occasions. His final rank in the militia was that of colonel and he died in 1813.⁴

William studied law at Harvard and started his practice in York. In 1811, he received the appointment of York County attorney. At this time his home was in Alfred. Later he established his permanent home in Portland. Under the Madison Administration he served as U.S. District Attorney for Maine.⁵ As a leading advocate of the separation of Maine from Massachusetts, he was a member of the convention which drew up the Maine Constitution. When Maine became a state in 1820, attorney Preble became Judge Preble with his appointment to the first Supreme Court of the State of Maine. Soon he resigned his judicial post to accept an appointment by President Jackson as minister plenipotentiary to the Netherlands.⁶

The King of Holland was arbitrator in the northern boundary (Maine) dispute between Great Britain and the United States. William Pitt Preble was one of four United States commissioners who worked on the final terms of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, ratified in 1842.⁷ To further enhance these major achievements Judge Preble was also a chief advocate and the first president of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad connecting Maine with Canada.⁸

The Prebles have easily earned the title of "the most distinguished York family."⁹ Descendants have lived in York for three centuries and most assuredly will continue to do so, even if the name Preble becomes lost through a hundred marriages.

¹ Jones, Herbert G., *King's Highway from Portland to Kittery*, p. 203.

² *Ibid.*

³ Preble, G. H., *Gen. Sketch, 1st Three Generations of Prebles*, pp. 27.

⁴ Everts and Peck, "*op. cit.*", p. 105.

¹ Banks, C. E., *History of York, Me.*, Vol. I, p. 151.

² Ernst, George, *New England Miniature*, p. 86.

³ Banks, C. E., *History of York, Me.*, Vol. I, p. 151.

⁴ Moody, Edward C., *Handbook History of the Town of York*.

⁵ Everts and Peck, "*Op. cit.*", p. 95.

⁶ Preble, G. H., "*op. cit.*", pp. 20-21.

⁷ Moody, Edward C., "*op. cit.*", p. 41.

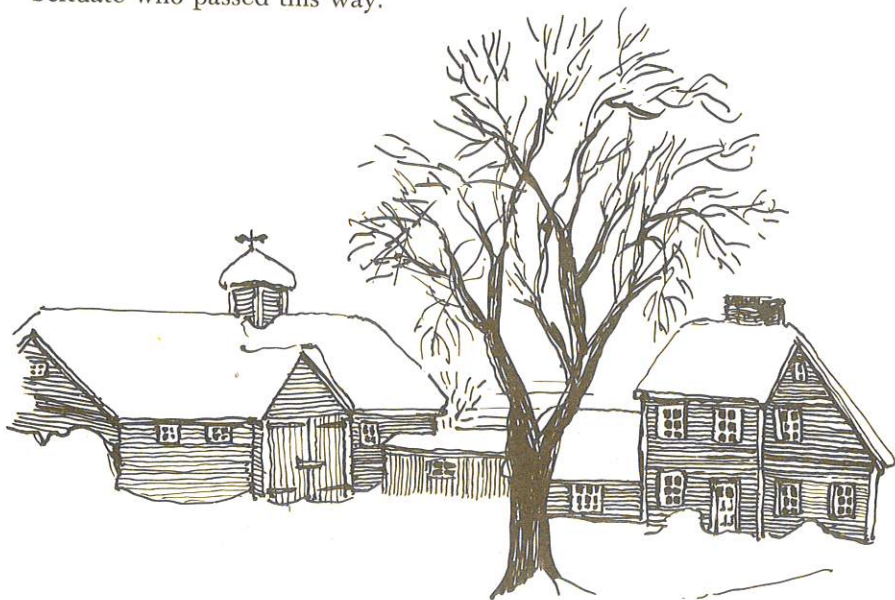
⁸ Preble, G. H. "*op. cit.*", p. 21.

⁹ Noyes, Sybil: et. al. "*op. cit.*", p. 565.

The Houses They Built

The men who gave their heritage to Scituate Men's Row have long since become part of the York soil, but some of the homes that they built remain as memorials to their passing. These buildings bear little or no resemblance to the original structures because of changes made by succeeding generations. Just two doors below the York Village Grammar School on York Street is the Joseph Banks House, built in 1696. Two doors from the Grammar School in the direction of the village stands a house once known as the Green Dragon Inn. It is entirely possible that some of the timbers date to the original Preble garrison which survived the Massacre of 1692.¹ Off Chase's Pond Road near Snowshoe Rock, the Samuel Preble House, built in 1725,² still stands. On Long Sands Road may be found the John Banks House. Erected in 1756, it has been used as a tavern, and is now a private residence. Nearby stands the Stephen Preble House (1670). Another house, that was built by Charles Bane in 1815, is located on York Street between the Grammar School and Organug Road.

Scituate Men's Row and the men who settled there provided the town of York with a rich heritage. The sons and daughters of the Preble and Banks families have contributed to the history of the state and nation as well as the town. Their influence is firmly established and a walk through prosperous twentieth century York will reveal on all sides the results and rewards that are here, because of four men from Scituate who passed this way.



¹ Ernst, George, *New England Miniture*, p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, p. 183.

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