

THE WOOD FAMILY

of

SHELF, HALIFAX PARISH, YORKSHIRE,
ENGLAND, MASSACHUSETTS, CONNECTICUT,
LONG ISLAND, N.Y., AND CANADA.

Written By

COLONEL CASEY A. WOOD, M.D., M.R.C., U.S. ARMY

for his

SECOND COUSIN S. CASEY WOOD, THE THIRD,

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I. INTRODUCTION

The data upon which this incomplete sketch of an Early Wood Family in America is based were obtained mainly from conversations with and a written account given the writer by his grandfather, Thomas Smith Wood (1788-1881) about 1869, and from the investigations (1908-1920) of Walter A. Wood, Secretary-Treasurer of the Lyman Wood Manufacturing Company, Racine, Wisconsin, undertaken also at the instance and cost of the writer.

Walter A. Wood may be regarded as the chief genealogist of Early Wood Families in the United States. He has at this writing (1920) about completed for publication a couple of volumes, the result of many years of attention to the subject. With the help of the Hon. Josiah Wood of Sackville, New Brunswick, of the writer and other Woods, Walter A. has had abstracts made by the College of Arms and other genealogical authorities in England of thousands of Wood wills, deeds, bills of sale, Parish Registers, as well as of Parish records and documents, likely to throw light on this subject. He has also collected a library of books, pamphlets and manuscripts relating to Colonial Wood families in the United States and England. In addition, many sources of information touching the career of members of early Wood families in America have been examined. Most of the libraries, Church records, Parish offices, etc. in the United States likely to possess Long Island and N. Y. Wood genealogical

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data have been searched. Thousands of abstracts of early Wood wills,* deeds, etc. have been collected and in the case of our own family, professional genealogists have been employed to examine the Parish records in Stamford, Conn., also in Huntington, Hempstead and other Long Island Parishes and New York counties - where our ancestors lived for over two hundred years. The writer also employed investigators to search the Newberry Library in Chicago (which has one of the most complete genealogical departments in the country) for additional data.

Information recording our Continental Army (drummer-boy) ancestor was furnished by the State authorities of Albany, New York. One may believe, then, that the statements made here are founded on evidence carefully collected, and are reliable.

The provision of certain family dates, now lacking, will probably be published in the forthcoming Walter Wood volumes.

Your second cousin, Mrs. Alba J. Hayes of Lemon Grove, California, has also assisted the writer in securing data of Thomas Smith Wood descendants.

There remain for settlement a number of questions. Was Timothy Wood, born 1722, son of Epenetus, among the youngest children of that progenitor, or was he the oldest

* See, for example, "Early Long Island Wills", with Genealogical and Historical Notes, by Wm. S. Pelletreau, Published by L.C. Harper, N. Y., 1919.

son of (an) Epenetus the Second, himself son of Epenetus the First? In other words, were there in our direct line two successive Woods (heading two generations) bearing this distinctive name or only one?

Again, in spite of all our investigations we do not know which of our ancestors (or the precise date when he) left Long Island and established the family succession in Newburgh-on-the-Hudson. It now appears as if it were Timothy - and the date about 1760. With these exceptions the details of the following brief biographies are approximately correct and will stand until the volumes by Walter A. Wood - just referred to - appear in print. When a full investigation of our ancestral tree is completed doubtless there will be shown - and not by the guesses of paid genealogists (?) but by proof furnished by reliable records - the names, places of residence, life dates and some of the doings of our ancestors well into the fifteenth century, probably, also, that some of our ancestors in the direct line had a Colonial War record, after their emigration to New England. Meantime, let us begin with the ancestor who, though born in England, introduced us as a family to American soil in 1630.

II. OUR WOOD FAMILY IN YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND.

According to Burke's Peerage, the Wood [Woode, Wode, Wod, Woodde, A'Wood, Atwood, Attewoode (for these and many more variants were from the twelfth to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries applied indifferently to many persons of the same line)] family is of ancient lineage, and many branches of it lived for centuries in the various English shires. Prominent among these (our direct Yorkshire ancestors did nothing, so far as we know, greatly to distinguish themselves) were Viscount Halifax and William Wood, agent of King Charles I and author of "New Englands Prospect."* These two men came from the same part of Yorkshire "we" did and the latter was probably related to the Edmond Wood mentioned in the short sketch that follows. In this sketch I shall speak only of the direct ancestors of the writer and yourself, leaving the more complete story to be told (should the contemplated volume referred to be published) by Mr. Walter Wood, who will doubtless give a more extended account of the collateral branches, of which only partial mention is possible here.

* This very rare book, containing the first map of the New England Coast, has been reprinted and is accessible in most large libraries. It should be read by every member of an Early Wood Family.

EDMOND WOOD

This, the first of our Anglo-American ancestors, was born in 1574 and was fourteen years old when the Great Armada* came sailing up the English Channel. We can believe, that Edmond's father and brothers performed their military and naval duties in this emergency, as all his descendants have done what they believed to be theirs. At any rate, in the little hamlet of Shelf, Parish of Halifax, Yorkshire, England, Edmond first appeared upon the scene. He must have been something above the average of men and he probably took some part in public affairs, because it appears from the parish records that he served as church-warden and represented his section in the Parish of Halifax.

During the later years of Queen Elizabeth and during the sovereignty of Mary, there was comparative religious quiet in England. The Roman Catholics and Puritans alike had retired into obscurity under the laws directed against them; but while the Scotch King, James I, reigned (1603-1625) the old animosities were uppermost, and led to the expatriation of many English families, who emigrated especially to Holland and America. Among these, as you know, were the Pilgrim Fathers, who sailed on the "Mayflower" from Plymouth, England, and landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts (1620) a little over three hundred years ago.

*Of course you will read as soon as you can Kingsley's "Westward Ho!", that tells a fine story of these and earlier times.

Matters political and religious went on from bad to worse under that foolish King, James I. Many of the best (because hardy, independent and adventurous) of his subjects left England in their search for a country - especially Holland and America - where they could worship their God in their own way.

Religious persecution and intolerance evidently had the same effect upon our Yorkshire Wood progenitors as they always have on a free people. Edmond, the former church-warden of the State Church, and his family were attracted by and probably became adherents of the Independents through the preaching of a non-conformist minister, the Rev. Mr. Denton. When the latter was forced to leave Halifax, give up his church (chapel) and flee the country, the more outspoken, adventurous and liberty-loving of his flock followed him into the wilderness of the New World rather than bow the knee to the political Baal in the Old.

There was little or no improvement in religious government under Charles I (1625-1649), and in 1629 most of the members of the Edmond Wood (then over fifty years of age) family, being involved in these religious difficulties, decided to emigrate to America. So Edmond Wood of Shelf, his son Jeremiah (Jeremy or Jerimiah, as variously spelled in the parish records) his brother Jonas Wood of Halifax and several others of the family sailed from Yarmouth on March

23rd 1630 in one or more ships of Governor Winthrop's* fleet (the "Arabella Jewel", the "Talbot" and the "Ambrose"). They arrived at Salem, Massachusetts, on June 12th 1630.

Records show that Edmond Wood afterwards moved to and lived in Stamford, Connecticut, and, indeed, in other villages of New England, but finally joined a band of farmers who bought land in the newly settled (Dutch) colony of Long Island (village of Hempstead) in 1644. On this fertile island his descendants for over a century were born, lived and died.

Parish and other Long Island (at first a part of Connecticut) records show them to have acquired land and perhaps to have lived not only at Hempstead, Long Island, but at Southampton, Smithtown and Huntington.°

Edmond Wood died in Huntington, L.I., probably about 1660. The records speak of him as having purchased lands in Smithtown (1650) and at Huntington in 1655.

It may be of interest to add a few data, mostly extracted from the Hempstead Town Records, regarding the early history of Long Island of which our family formed an important part.

 *You should read Winthrop's Journal, giving a most interesting account of his life and times, and throwing much light on the habits of thought and domestic life both of the "old" country and of the New England between which he sailed back and forth for many years after 1628.

°Benj. F. Thompson's "History of Long Island" (last edition, 3 Vols. Robt.H.Dodd, New York, 1918) is of great interest and well worth reading. The original Woods of L.I. are often mentioned in it. See, also, the Encyclopedia Britannica, under Long Island.

The first white man to set foot on Long Island, was probably a boat crew from Henry Hudson's famous ship "The Half Moon", who in the early part of September, 1609, landed at Coney Island to bury one of their comrades, who had been killed by natives while exploring the bay and river.

The Dutch made settlements on the western end of the Island in 1636, at Brooklyn, Flatlands and Flushing.

About the same time the east end was occupied by the English. Hempstead was the first town in that part of the Island to be occupied by them, in 1643. John Carman and the Rev. Robert Fordham, acting for their associates at Stamford, Conn., purchased the Indian title to the land at Hempstead, and on November 16, 1644, Governor Kieft, Dutch Governor of New Netherlands, gave the patent.

The first actual settlement was made on this tract of land in 1644 by between thirty and forty families from Stamford, Conn., among whom are mentioned Edmond, Jonas and Jeremy Wood.

The first recorded division of lands at Hempstead took place in 1647 and it appears that at this time there were sixty-two freeholders in the town; each person was allotted land in proportion to the amount of money he had contributed to the public funds. Plots varied in size from ten to two hundred acres.

The first settlers seem to have been a brave and hardy race, uncultured and of simple habits, but kindly dis-

posed, seeking to do right as they understood it. The records of the courts prove that no great crimes or serious breaches of the law occurred in those early days and the people seemed to live in great harmony and to have manifested a creditable degree of neighborly good will. The most serious matters to engage public attention during this period were the settlement of town boundaries and the discussion of religious questions.

A few references to Edmond Wood
from the Hempstead Parish Records, Vol. I.

- p. 162. "Apr. 18, 1665: John Smith R. (Rock of Hempstead sells land that was once 'Edmon Wodes'.
- p. 474. Feb. 14, 1682/3: Joseph Langdon of H'stead sells land that formerly belonged to Edmond Wood.
- Vol. 3. p. 218. June 15, 1710: Jonas Wood of Huntington resigns all rights to Wm. Willis to certain property once his grandfather's Edmond Wood belonging in Town of Hempstead."

Some references to Jeremiah Wood, Sr.,
Hempstead Parish Records, Vol. I.

- p. 21. "1657 - Jeremy Wood hath sixe gattes (goats) at the neck (of land).
- p. 28. 1657 - Jeremy Wood one cove, two hors, five turned to neck."

After the British had obtained peaceful possession of Long Island they at once began to anglicize the various Dutch* names of the Island. For example, in the villages and towns, for Burgomaster, Schepen and Schout were substituted Mayor, Alderman and Sheriff.

*See Washington Irving's "Knickerbocker History of New York".

About 1665 the British Governor, for the purpose of bringing order out of the general confusion and especially to settle disputed titles to lands - for the Long Islanders were farmers and fishermen - called a Convention of the inhabitants of the chief towns. Two representatives were elected from each of seventeen municipalities (see Thompson's "History of Long Island", Vol.I,p.187) one of whom was our Jonas Wood, representing the town of Huntington.

Among the doings of this Convention (which was the most important event of this period in the history of Long Island) that concerns us in particular was the erection of Long Island and Staten Island into an English shire or county, with its subdivisions of Ridings - East, West and North; and out of compliment to the Woods and other Yorkshiresmen who first peopled the new colony it was called YORKSHIRE. Later on these divisions were somewhat changed but the new county was so called for many years.

In early colonial days the emigrants were greatly concerned in the dominant interest that brought them to the new land - their church and their religious liberty. As a rule, the emigrant's family looked up to the Minister as their leader, and when he moved from one locality to another they were very likely to accompany or follow him. It is highly probable, therefore, that the Rev. Richard Denton (Thompson's "History of Long Island", Vol.II,p.498) had much to do with the settlement of Edmond, Jonas and Jeremiah Wood

in Hempstead, Huntington and other Long Island townships. This Mr. Denton (an Oxford graduate) was minister of Coley Chapel in Halifax (1623-1630) and emigrated [in consequence of the Act of (Non-Conformity) Uniformity and other intolerance] with the Woods in 1630. He then had a charge in several New England towns, the last of which was Hempstead, going to that place from Stamford, Conn., where the Woods were living at the time. What could be more natural than that the latter should follow the leader and teacher - also a Yorkshireman - whom they had known so well in the Old Land? It seems probable that Edmond and a number of other Halifax Woods not only came out in the same (1630) Winthrop fleet with Denton but some of them may have followed this religious leader after their arrival in Salem, Mass., first to Watertown, Mass., then to Wethersfield, Conn., then to Stamford, Conn.; thence to Hempstead, where their wanderings came to an end for over a century.

The historian of Connecticut (Rev. Mr. Alford) referring to these "civil and religious fathers of the colony" says that they were among the earliest inhabitants of New England, "coming, through Wethersfield and Watertown, from that noted company who arrived with John Winthrop and Sir Richard Saltonstall".

The first partition of land among the settlers took place in 1647. The number of acres apportioned to each immigrant was determined by the financial and other aid given

the new community. Among these freeholders are the names of (our) Edmond, Jeremy and Jonas Wood. In 1685 (says Thompson, loco cit.) Jerimiah Wood, Sr., owned 300 acres, which classed him among the largest of the proprietors.

With his old Halifax adherents as a nucleus Mr. Denton built up a relatively large (Independent or Presbyterian) congregation in the log church, erected in 1645-1648 at the public charge (because all the early settlers were of the same belief) and used also for general public (town) meetings. It stood until 1770, a new, larger and more pretentious building having meantime been erected - in 1677.

JEREMIAH (or JEREEMY) WOOD THE FIRST

The second son of Edmond (Jeremiah, born January 1, 1620, died, December 28, 1686) accompanied his father on one of Governor Winthrop's ships, and with another son, Jonas "of Oram" (so-called to distinguish him from a second Jonas in the same family, Oram being a township near Shelf, not far from Halifax) are named among the thirty or forty families who composed the actual (American) settlement of Hempstead in 1644.

Jeremiah Wood the First was identified with Hempstead, L. I., all his life; was a patentee of the town and one of its "first citizens". He received a generous allotment of lands and became what in those days would be regarded as a

rich man. He held during his lifetime several responsible public offices.

Many details of this ancestor's life - name of his wife, list of children, etc, as in that of others - are left for the fuller account of the family to be published later by Walter A. Wood.

JEREMIAH (or JEREMY) WOOD THE SECOND.

The eldest son (and child) of Jeremiah Wood the First was very properly named after his father. He was born in (Huntingdon or) Hempstead, Long Island, about 1650 (it is expected that a search now going on will furnish the exact life dates of all these ancestors) and seems to have been pretty much the same sort of man and to have lead about the same kind of life as his father. He had ten children by his wife Susanna, and mentions them all in his will, which was duly probated, and still stands of record in the Parish archives. Jeremiah Second died in October, 1710.

In 1682 the names of both Jeremy Woods, father and son, as well as that of Jonas Wood are affixed to an agreement to pay the minister, Rev. Jeremiah Hobart ("Jeremy Hubard" in the church record!) his salary (£70) "in Corn or Cattel at Prise as it Pasis Currant amongst us". In August, 1683, the town voted that Jeremy Wood (probably the Second) should have ten shillings a year for the important post of "looking after ye opening and shutting of the window shutters belonging to ye meeting house, and to look carefully after