

*From the Historical Society***Founding Fathers of Nayaug, Part II**

by Susan Goodrich Motycka

The section of town known as Nayaug was purchased from the Native Americans by the Wethersfield proprietors (investors) several years after they had established a settlement on the west side of the Connecticut River. It expanded southward their east bank property called Naubuc Farms, which was part of their original purchase. When Naubuc Farms was surveyed in 1639, it was divided into 34 lots, one for each of the 34 proprietors. Nayaug remained undivided until 1641 when 120 acres were granted to Richard Treat. Several years later, his son-in-law John Hollister was granted a 50-acre parcel. Soon both men would acquire additional acreage as they gained political prominence.



Susan Motycka

Richard Treat never lived on his "Nayog Farm," which eventually included over 900 acres. In 1652 he gifted it to his eldest son Richard Jr., the first family member to reside in Nayaug. He, his wife Sarah Coleman and their seven children lived on "a seven acre parcel of upland" with a house and a barn. It was probably in the vicinity of Tryon Street where the nearby ferry provided access to church and town activities across the river. By 1688 he owned 1,860 acres, which later provided home sites for his children and grandchildren.

Richard Jr. was a corporal in Wethersfield's Trainband, a military unit similar to today's National Guard. All young men were required to attend training drills six times a year. Those who lived on the eastern shore had to cross the river to participate. In 1653, to avoid this, the General Court (the colony's legislature) granted permission to hold drills on both shores. Assured of a means of defense, inhabitants of Nayaug and Naubuc Farms began to talk of separating from Wethersfield. Richard Jr., his sons Richard and Thomas, his brother-in-law John Hollister and son-in-law Ephraim Goodrich were among those who signed the petition for becoming an independent town.

The Treats maintained a friendship with the local Wangunk tribe. Richard Jr. and his son Thomas learned to speak the language. In 1703 Thomas was appointed a lieutenant in the colonial militia and sent on an expedition against the French in Canada. Because of his "extraordinary labour and science as an interpreter and managing the Indians who served in the expedition" he was awarded 30 shillings from pub-

lic funds.

Thomas inherited Treat Farm in 1693. Soon after, he built the house that still stands at 251 Tryon Street, near the corner of Dug Road. That house remained unchanged for over 250 years, with no electricity, plumbing, or central heating. By the mid-20th century, it was restored and now is an excellent example of a typical colonial home—one of the oldest in the Glastonbury/Rocky Hill Ferry Historic District.

Thomas and his wife Dorothy Bulkeley had five sons and three daughters. Their oldest son Richard graduated from Harvard and became an itinerant minister. He was deeply interested in his Native American neighbors and hoped to convert them to Christianity. For a time he held weekly classes for Wangunk children. His strong religious convictions may have come from his maternal grandfather, the Reverend Gershom Bulkeley who was also a doctor and lawyer.

Gershom's parents, the Reverend Peter Bulkeley and Grace Chetwood, left England because of his nonconforming religious beliefs. On the voyage to America, Grace became comatose and was presumed dead. Peter refused to commit her body to the sea, begging the Captain to wait three more days. Miraculously she regained consciousness. Soon after their arrival in Massachusetts, Gershom was born.

With this extraordinary beginning, Gershom went on to live a remarkable life. He studied theology and medicine at Harvard where he met his wife Sarah Chauncey, the president's daughter. After graduating in 1655, he became a minister in New London and then in Wethersfield. In 1676 during King Phillip's War, he was appointed a surgeon to the army. After the war, he resigned as minister in Wethersfield and moved to Nayaug. There, as the first licensed physician in the colony, he practiced medicine and devoted time to research. After the death of his son-in-law in 1712, he moved to 215 Tryon Street to live with his daughter.

Gershom, who had mastered Greek, Latin and Dutch, became a highly respected magistrate and statesman. In 1664 he played a key role in ending Connecticut's witchcraft trials. Claiming "it's a great scandal," he advocated changes that made it extremely difficult to convict someone of being a witch. An ardent Loyalist, he wrote numerous treatises opposing rebellious colonists. In 1687 as Justice under Sir Edmund Andros, he supported the government's right to seize the Connecticut Charter. According to historian John Hammond Trumbull, he "had few superiors in the colony in natural ability and professional learning or general scholarship": a man of "overwhelming self-importance," "obstinate," and "with a litigious spirit."



**The Thomas Treat house at 251 Tryon Street, built in 1695, is one of the oldest in the Glastonbury/Rocky Hill Historic District. This picture was taken in 1962, before this home was extensively renovated.**

This had consequences. Gershom owned land on the southern border of Naubuc Farms, which also bordered land owned by John Hollister, his son-in-law's uncle. He and Hollister disagreed on the boundary. Their dispute went before the General Court, and the Court ordered a new town survey. It was discovered that the brook marking the northern border of what is now Glastonbury had changed its course, moving the border 85 ½ rods south. Gershom won the

suit thereby gaining the disputed land. The land lost at the northern border now belongs to East Hartford.

*[This is the second in a series of articles by Mrs. Motycka about some of Nayaug's founders. For more information or to join the Historical Society, please call 860-633-6890. Our email is hsglastonbury@sbcglobal.net, our website is www.hsgct.org and we are on Facebook.]*

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