

From the Historical Society

Founding Fathers of Nayaug, Part I

by Susan Goodrich Motycka

In 1636, thirty-four men from Watertown, MA formed a proprietary (corporation) and bought a large tract of land from the sachem Sowheag. The property extended six miles along the Connecticut River, six miles to the west and three miles to the east. Their settlement, which later became Wethersfield,



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was established on the west bank. The land on the east side, called Naubuc Farms, was left as shared farmland until 1639 when it was surveyed and divided into 34 parcels. These plots were awarded to the proprietors (shareholders) who either sold it or passed it on to their heirs.

The land at the southern boundary of Naubuc Farms was known as Nayaug, meaning "Land of Noisy Waters." Sometime before 1640, a three-mile-wide parcel that extended from today's Stockade Road to the Portland border was purchased from Sowheag's son Tarramuggus. For several years it remained unassigned. Eventually considerable acreage was granted to Richard Treat and John Hollister. These two men were not among the colony's earliest settlers, but they were among its wealthiest.

Richard Trott, as he was first known, left Somerset England in 1637 with his wife and nine children. He had been an active and outspoken member of the parish in Pitminster. Several years earlier, he had questioned the young vicar's extravagant purchase of three church bells. This resulted in a court hearing and may have influenced his decision to leave England.

Today that church remembers him as a favorite son. A bronze tablet describes how he became a leader in the Connecticut Colony, his son Robert became a governor, and one of his descendants signed the Declaration of Independence. This story of the bells is told in an informational brochure. One of the bells remains, as does a tower clock, which was donated in 1903 by a Treat descendant.

Treat lived on the west side of the river where he owned extensive property. He was well-educated, well-respected and consistently referred

to as "Mister," a prefix granted only to a select few. In addition to representing Wethersfield in the General Court for many years, he was an Assistant to the Colony, a Patentee of the Royal Charter of Connecticut granted by Charles II, and a member of Governor Winthrop's Council.

In 1641 Treat was allotted 120 acres in Nayaug. He eventually acquired 900 more. His "farm at Nayog" started at the southern bank of Roaring Brook, which was further to the north than it is today, and continued for nearly a mile along the river and three miles into the wilderness. It is listed as lot 36 on early maps. His neighbor to the north, on lot 35, was John Hollister.

Hollister arrived from Bristol, England in about 1638. He apparently came from a well-to-do family, which enabled him to become a property owner at a young age. In 1639 he married Treat's daughter Joanna, assuring himself a prosperous future. It is believed that the marriage was arranged while the families were still in England.

Like his father-in-law, Hollister served in the General Court. In 1655 he was appointed to Wethersfield's War Committee and by 1657 was called Lieutenant Hollister. Although highly respected, he had a reputation of being rather obstinate. In 1658 his opinions concerning the governing policies of the Wethersfield church clashed with the minister's and he was excommunicated. He was refused a hearing on the charges and petitioned the General Court. It was probably to his advantage that the governor was his brother-in-law. His reinstatement resulted in the minister's dismissal.

Unlike Treat, Hollister actively farmed his Nayaug land. Because he lived on the western bank, it was necessary to cross the river to plow his fields and tend his crops. The Nayaug tribe was curious about the newcomer and sent their strongest brave to check him out. As a test of strength, he was challenged to a wrestling match. Hollister was certain that he could win. Although his opponent had strong leg muscles from running, his back and arms were relatively weak. This was because it was the native women who were responsible for hoeing fields and grinding corn—work that builds upper-body strength. Being a clever man, Hollister decided to tire his opponent and end the match in a tie. So they wrestled and rested, wrestled



An archeological dig last summer on a Tryon Street property looking for foundations and other remains of the colonial settlement that became Glastonbury. State Archeologist Brian Jones calls this currently the most significant dig in the northeastern U. S.

and rested until day's end, when they smoked a peace pipe and began a lifelong friendship.

In 1649 Hollister built a small farmhouse near the river bank. Several years later he purchased another house and a ten-acre farm, which he rented to his tenant farmers, the Gilbert brothers. His permanent residence was in Wethersfield but he often stayed in his riverside home. This is known because in his will, he left his "feather bed at Nayaug" to John, his oldest son.

When Richard Treat, Jr. inherited the Treat Farm in 1652, he and his wife Sarah Coleman

became the first family members to live in Nayaug. In 1655 twenty-two-year-old John Hollister, Jr. inherited his father's property in Nayaug. Two years later he married Sarah Goodrich and moved into the little riverside home. Their stories will be told in future articles.

[This is the first in a series of articles by Mrs. Motycka about Nayaug's founding fathers. 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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