

HISTORY

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CAMBRIDGE,

MASSACHUSETTS.

1630—1877.

WITH A

GENEALOGICAL REGISTER.

LUCIUS R. PAIGE.

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1877.

1. 2.

of the church. Many other words did he utter to the like purpose in the audience of the abovesaid assembly. The above written being truth for substance, and the very words that he then uttered as near as I can remember. 9, 5<sup>th</sup>, 77.

JN<sup>o</sup>. DANFORTH."

No immediate action seems to have been had by the court. But on the 20th of November, after Bowers was discharged from prison in accordance with the order of the General Court before mentioned, the foregoing deposition was substantially confirmed by the oaths of five witnesses, and the court rendered judgment Dec. 18, 1677: "Benanuel Bowers and Elizabeth Bowers his wife appearing before the Court to answer the presentment of the Grand Jury for reproaching and slandering Thomas Danforth, and by their own confession convicted thereof, the Court sentenced them to be openly whipped fifteen stripes apiece, unless they pay five pounds apiece in money; and to stand committed until the sentence of the Court be executed."

Quakerism obtained no firm establishment in Cambridge; there is no evidence within my knowledge that it extended beyond the family of Mr. Bowers. Whether he held fast the faith through life or renounced it, and whether he maintained perpetual warfare or made his peace with the civil and ecclesiastical rulers, does not appear.<sup>1</sup> It may be hoped, however, that the closing years of his life were peaceful. It is certain that the witnesses of his will (dated Oct. 5, 1698, and proved May 28, 1698), were John Leverett, H. C. 1680, William Brattle, H. C. 1680, Isaac Chauncy, H. C. 1698, and Joseph Baxter, H. C. 1698; of whom the first was afterwards President of Harvard College, and all the others became orthodox ministers. This fact justifies the presumption that he did not regard them as persecutors, and that they did not consider him to be an arch heretic.

Early in 1692, a strange infatuation seized the inhabitants of Salem village, and soon spread widely. It was imagined that Satan was making a deadly assault on men through the intervention of witches. I do not propose to enter upon the general history of that tragedy;<sup>2</sup> but as one of the victims was a child

<sup>1</sup> The *Court Records* indicate that as late as June, 1682, he was fined for non-attendance on public worship, and that in April, 1681, both he and his son George were fined for the same offence. His wife during her old age, for her testimony was received in Court, Dec. 26, 1693, notwithstanding "she being a Quaker took no oath."

<sup>2</sup> "The mischief began at Salem in February; but it soon extended into

of Cambridge, a brief notice of her case may be proper. Rebecca, daughter of Thomas and Rebecca Andraw, was born here, April 18, 1646, and married John Frost, June 26, 1666; he died in 1672, and she married George Jacobs, Jr., of Salem. The father of her second husband and her own daughter had already been imprisoned, and her husband had fled to escape a similar fate, when she was arrested on suspicion of witchcraft. She was long confined in prison, leaving four young children, one of them an infant, to the tender mercies of her neighbors. What made her case the more deplorable was, that she had long been partially deranged. During her confinement, her mother<sup>1</sup> presented a petition to the court in her behalf, on account of her mental infirmity, but in vain. She then addressed to the Governor and Council a petition which is still preserved in the archives of the Commonwealth, and which deserves insertion here:—

“To his Excellency Sir William Phips, Knt., Governor, and the honorable Council now sitting in Boston, the humble petition of Rebecah Fox of Cambridge sheweth, —

“That whereas Rebecah Jacobs (daughter of your humble petitioner) has a long time, even many months now lyen in prison for Witchcraft, and is well known to be a person crazed, distracted, and broken in mind, your humble petitioner does most humbly and earnestly seek unto your Excellency and to your Honors for relief in this case. Your petitioner, who knows well the condition of her poor daughter, together with several others of good repute and credit, are ready to offer their oaths that the said Jacobs is a woman crazed, distracted, and broken in her mind; and that she has been so these twelve years and upwards. However, for (I think) above this half year the said Jacobs has lyen in prison, and yet remains there, attended with many sore difficulties. Christianity and nature do each of them oblige your petitioner to be very solicitous in this matter; and although many weighty cases do exercise your thoughts, yet your petitioner can have no rest in her mind till such time as she has offered this her address on behalf of her daughter. Some have died already in prison, and others have been dangerously sick, and how soon others, and

various parts of the Colony. The contagion, however, was principally within the County of Essex. Before the close of September, nineteen persons were executed and one pressed to death, all of whom asserted their innocence.”—*Helmer's Amer. Annals*, l. 438.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Andrew, the father of Mrs. Jacobs, died about 1647, and his widow married Nicholas Wyeth; he died July 19, 1680, and she married Thomas Fox, Dec. 16, 1685; she died in 1698.

among them my poor child, by the difficulties of this confinement, may be sick and die, God only knows. She is incapable of making that shift for herself that others can do; and such are her circumstances on other accounts, that your petitioner, who is her tender mother, has many great sorrows and almost overcoming burthens on her mind upon her account; but in the midst of all her perplexities and troubles (next to supplicating to a good and merciful God), your petitioner has no way for help but to make this her afflicted condition known unto you. So, not doubting but your Excellency and your Honors will readily hear the cries and groans of a poor distressed woman, and grant what help and enlargement you may, your petitioner heartily begs God's gracious presence with you, and subscribes herself in all humble manner your sorrowful and distressed petitioner,

REBECCA FOX."<sup>1</sup>

This petition availed nothing, except perhaps to delay the trial. The poor demented woman was kept in prison until the next January, when she was indicted, tried, and acquitted. Before this January Court, a great change had occurred in the public opinion. A principal reason for such a change is mentioned by Hutchinson: "Ordinarily, persons of the lowest rank in life have had the misfortune to be charged with witchcrafts; and although many such had suffered, yet there remained in prison a number of women, of as respectable families as any in the towns where they lived, and several persons, of still superior rank, were hinted at by the pretended bewitched, or by the confessing witches. Some had been publicly named. Dudley Bradstreet, a justice of the peace, who had been appointed one of President Dudley's Council, and who was son to the worthy old governor, then living, found it necessary to abscond. Having been remiss in prosecuting, he had been charged by some of the afflicted as a confederate. His brother, John Bradstreet, was forced to fly also. Calef says it was intimated that Sir William Phips's lady was among the accused. It is certain that one who pretended to be bewitched at Boston, where the infection was beginning to spread, charged the Secretary of the colony of Connecticut. Mrs. Hale, wife to the minister of Beverly, was accused also; which caused her husband to alter his judgment, and to be less active in prosecutions than he had been."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mass. Arch.*, cxxxv. 76.

jury found bills against about fifty for

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Mass.*, ii. 60. Hutchinson adds: witchcraft, one or two men, the rest  
"At the Court in January, the grand women; but upon trial they were all ac-