

Edmund Freeman

by Irving Freeman

I was born on June 25th 1596 in Pulborough, Sussex, England. In my pre-immigration life I lived not only in Pulborough, but I moved to Billinghamurst, Sussex in 1619-1620, and lived there for seven or eight years. On June 16, 1617, in Cowfold, Sussex, England, I married Bennett Hodsohl, daughter of John Hodsohl and Faith Gratwick Bacon. Bennett bore me six children before she died on April 12, 1630, in Pulborough. On August 10, 1632, I married my second wife, Elizabeth Raymer, in Shipley, Sussex, England. She was born about 1600 in England. I sailed on board the *Abigail* from London, arriving in Boston, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony on October 8th 1635, infected with smallpox. On board the *Abigail* with me was my wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Freeman, as well as my 4 surviving children, Alice, Edward (Edmund), Elizabeth, and John.

I moved to Saugus, in the Bay Colony on December 10, 1635. I presented the colony with twenty pieces of armor plate. Within two years, however, I moved to Duxbury in Plymouth Colony, where I was admitted as a freeman on January 2, 1636/1637. I was present at a general meeting of the 'freemen' of Plymouth on March 7, 1636/1637.

On April 3, 1637, nine other men of Saugus and I gained the agreement of the General Court of Plymouth Colony to commence the establishment of the first English Town on Cape Cod. It was written at the time that we went to Cape Cod "to worship God and make money." Within two years, the settlement was legally incorporated as the town of Sandwich. Elizabeth and I settled near Scusset Marsh in 1638 and also owned land in Ploughed Neck in East Sandwich.

I was quite active in public affairs, and in 1640 I was appointed as the representative of Sandwich along with Thomas Dimmock of Barnstable and John Crow of Yarmouth, to meet and discuss the causes/controversies with the three townships of Cape Cod. I was elected as one of the seven Assistant Governors of Plymouth on June 2, 1640,

and re-elected annually through June, 1645. When the government of Plymouth realized the need for a means to resolve small legal cases on Cape Cod without the parties having to go to Plymouth, I was appointed head of a court of three men to hear and determine such cases.

I had tolerant and liberal views through two cases. Late in 1645, Captain William Vassal petitioned the Plymouth Court to legalize men of every religious belief who would still "preserve the civil peace and submit unto government." The Plymouth counsel of seven plus the Governor were evenly divided, with my being among those in favor of the petition. The conservative faction obtained a delay and the matter was never raised again, while Plymouth became steadily more rigid in its intolerance of beliefs other than those of the established church.

The second incident came when I counselled moderation during the Quakers troubles in the Colonies, which reached Sandwich 16 or 17 years after its settlement. I opposed the enactment and enforcement of severe and illiberal punishments for the Quakers. This principled stand put me in opposition to many others in the Plymouth Colony government and resulted in my not being re-elected. Elizabeth and I were less than devoted to the established Separatist church of Plymouth Colony, and on October 7th 1651, we, along with eleven other people of Sandwich, were presented to the court for not "frequenting the publick worship of God". Nevertheless, according to historian, Frederick Freeman, I was "pre-eminently respected, always fixed in principle, and decisive in action, nevertheless quiet and unobtrusive, a counsellor and leader without ambitious ends in view, of uncompromising integrity and of sound judgment."

Despite all my problems with the Puritans of the Plymouth Colony and their view on punishing Quakers, I still favored the Quakers and even allowed them to use my home for their meetings.

My wife Elizabeth died in Sandwich on February 14, 1675/1676. I

wrote my will on June 21, 1682 (proved November 2, 1682), where I assigned as executors my son, John, my daughter, Elizabeth Ellis, and my son-in-law, Edward Perry. I gave my land to them, as well as to my other son, Edmund, and his grandson, Thomas Paddy. I referred also to land I had already given to my grandson, Matthias Ellis on February 24th 1678 in Sandwich.

My wife and I are both buried on a hill at the rear of my house under rustic stone monuments, known as "the saddle and pillion" which I selected myself at the time of my wife's death. It is the oldest burying ground in Sandwich. The graves are now marked by metal plaques on the original farm, located on Tupper Road, just east of Route 6A in Sandwich. The plot is located on the right side of Tupper Road behind what is now the 'Snow Goose' store.