

William Wood by Kaethe Maguire

One of the lesser known of the ten men of Saugus who founded Sandwich was an erudite gentleman of profound literary skill named William Wood. Research tells us that the name was most likely Woodis in the Derbyshire area of England where William was born in in 1582.

One of our early colonial settlements to the northwest of our Sandwich, namely Concord, MA, claims William Wood also as one of its early founders. I have even read research, poorly sourced obviously, that stated that William Wood arrived on our shores in 1638 and went directly to the area of Concord with his brother John. NOT TRUE!

Actually, William, his first wife Martha Sawyer, his brother John and at least two young children arrived in Salem in 1628 as part of the John Endicott fleet with the intention of founding a colony.

As with our other nine founders, William and family first settled in "Saugust", now part of Lynn. William was named a Freeman as of 18 May 1631 and settled in to the area for about four years.

His occupation is listed as "author" and in 1633 he traveled back to England to publish his 100 page volume entitled "New England Prospects". One can speculate if indeed this publication served as some sort of advertisement for emigration to New England? He also published a map of eastern New England.

Returning to Lynn in 1634 he served as deputy of the Mass Bay General court for Lynn for 1635 and 1636.

The Plymouth General Court was obviously looking for good leadership when they granted permission for the 10 men to travel south to become the first proprietors of Sandwich in 1637.

“On 3 April 1637 William Wood was one of the ten men of ‘Saugaus’ who were permitted by the Plymouth General Court to view a place to set down and have sufficient lands for 3 score families.” (This would be the 60 families who soon followed).¹

Now we enter the time of his life when for some reason, perhaps his links to the Flint family, or at the request of his brother John, William was called north to the land, which became known as Concord. The year was 1638. Since he obviously did not cut his ties with Sandwich, since he also briefly served as Sandwich Town Clerk,² we can only assume that his family remained in Sandwich at least for a while.

Two Wood children were born in Sandwich in 1648 and 1649. Sandwich records show only one man named Wood and that person named William Wood, at this time period. Sadly, records of the Wood family disappear by 1650 and the family settled permanently in Concord where the winters are long, harsh and full of snow.

“In an undated deed (acknowledged on 3 June 1650), “William Wood of Sandwidge” sold to James Skiffe of Sandwich “His dwelling house ...in Sandwidge aforesaid with one barn and stalls for cattle adjoining thereunto together with all lands to the said house belonging whether uplands or meadows...together with all his right title and interest and into the said premises.” “Jane Wood (second wife), the wife of William Wood” consented on 3 June 1650³

¹ Plimouth Court Records 1635/36 MBCR 1:164.

² Russell A. Lovell Jr. Sandwich, A Cape Cod Town: 1984 p. 31

³ MD 2:246-48, citing PCLR 2:155-56, as cited in NEGHS The Great Migration Series by Charles Anderson v. 1-3 p. 2053

William died in Concord on 14 May 1671. Having spoken with the overseers of the cemeteries and old burial grounds of Concord, we do not believe there is an actual marked grave for William in Concord.

Their oldest burying ground is right in the center of the village and is called Old Hill. The first recorded burial ground there is 1667. They are, on the whole, a younger community than old Sandwich. Row A of our Old Town Burying Ground is full of unmarked graves, some of which predate the founding of the burying ground in 1663.

The staff at Concord has kindly offered to help me tour the oldest burying grounds for Wood family members and they assure me they have a full genealogy of the family. After all, to them he is a 'founder', even tho it appears to me he just took a jaunt north to visit his brother John in the area and stayed for a bit before returning to Sandwich for at least 10 more years.

The Concord historians also told me that there are members of the Wood family buried in an especially designed place in nearby Sudbury called the Revolutionary War Burying Ground. I am hoping to tour and record those stones as well.

The family certainly did multiply and prosper there. While touring the newer Sleepy Hollow Cemetery with my grand daughter, Lucy, in search of her beloved Louisa May Alcott's grave we came across a vast stone monument marked Wood.

William Wood was my 9th great grand father and Lucy, born and being raised in Concord, ironically, is an 11th great granddaughter of William Wood. As Barbara Gill always tells me, once you are related to one of the old families, you are related to them all, and we are!

