

THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO FOUGHT ON BOTH SIDES IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Contributed by Noreen C. Pramberg

NOTE: While researching some of the First Settlers of Newbury, I came across this story. I hope you enjoy it.

John Whitley was born in England and was forced to serve in the British Army. He was in sympathy with the American Rebels; however, he was brought to this country to fight against the colonists in their bid for freedom from England. Upon arrival, he escaped into a swamp. Shortly after his desertion, he joined the American forces where he served until the end of hostilities.

John Whitley married at Lyman, New Hampshire, 16 May 1787 Lydia George. She was baptized at Weare, New Hampshire, 17 October 1764, daughter of Stephen and Merrill (Pattee-Stevens) George. Her father, Stephen George, was the son of Thomas and Sarah (Swett) George.

Sarah Swett, born at Hampton, New Hampshire, 23 December 1700, daughter of John and Bethia (Page) Swett.; married Thomas George. He was born at Amesbury 25 March 1699, son of Samuel and Elizabeth (Frame) George; removed to Derryfield, New Hampshire; and his will of 16 June 1748 was proved 26 September 1753. Sarah (Swett) George died at Kingston, New Hampshire, 29 August 1797, aged 92 years.

John Swett, born at Hampton 17 : 3 mo. : 1670, son of Benjamin and Esther (Weare) Swett;; married at Hampton 3 December 1696 Bethia Page. She was born at Hampton 23 : 3 mo. : 1679, daughter of Thomas and Mary (Hussey) Page; and died at Kingston, New Hampshire, 16 April 1736. John Swett married, second, at Kingston 10 November 1736 Sarah (Treadwell) Brown. She was born at Ipswich, Massachusetts, 15 August 1674, daughter of Nathaniel and Abigail (Wells) Treadwell; and married, first, Joseph Brown. He was born at Newbury 11 or 18 October 1669, son of Joshua and Sarah (Sawyer) Brown; died at Amesbury 18 October 1732, aged 63 years; and his will of 30 June 1729 was proved 30 October 1732 [EP3673]. Sarah (Treadwell-Brown) Swett died at Kingston 14 April 1756; and her will of ___ ___ ___ was proved 31 May 1756 [EP26981]. John Swett died at Kingston 3 September 1753; and his will of 16 June 1748 was proved 26 September 1753 [NHPR].

Benjamin Swett, baptized at Wymondham, Norfolk, England, 12 May 1624, son of John and Phebe (____) Swett; married at Newbury 1 November 1647 Esther Weare. She was the daughter of Nathaniel and Sarah (____) Weare. They removed to Hampton, New Hampshire. Benjamin Swett was killed by Indians at Black Point, Scarborough, Maine, 29 June 1677; and administration of his estate was granted 9 October 1677. Esther (Weare) Swett married, second, at Newbury 31 March 1679 Stephen Greenleaf. He was baptized at St. Margaret's la Tour, Ipswich, Suffolk County, England, 10 August 1628, son of Edmund and Sarah (Dole) Greenleaf; and married, first, at Newbury 13 November 1651 Elizabeth Coffin. She was the daughter of Tristram and Dionis (Stevens) Coffin; and died at Newbury 19 November 1678. Esther (Weare-Swett) Greenleaf died at Hampton 16 January 1717/8, aged 89 years. Stephen Greenleaf died, "cast on shore at" Cape Breton "coming from Canada and all lost" 1 December (sic) 1690; and his will of ___ ___ ___ was proved 25 November 1690.

There is an interesting story Benjamin Swett's death at the hands of the Indians: *History of the Town of Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, From the Time of the First Settlement Within Its*

Borders, by Warren Brown, Manchester, N.H., 1900, page 221-3: “Capt. Benjamin Swett...was a celebrated Indian Warrior....April 29, 1677, he commanded the garrison at Wells (Maine). For the defense of Black Point and the security of Winter harbor, the General Court ordered a company of forty men to be recruited, two hundred Christian Indians taken into service, and all such able-bodied men enlisted or impressed as could be found who had migrated from the province of Maine. The command of the forces, including the Indians, was given to Capt. Swett and Lt. Richardson. They arrived at Black Point on the 28th of June in high spirits. It is a rule of policy in fighting the Indians to gain time. Aware of this maxim, and informed of the fact that the savages had been seen hovering about the place, Swett at the head of one division and Richardson the other, joined by some of the inhabitants, led out the whole force the next morning...a large decoy, supposed to be the main body of the Indians, feigned a retreat, and were pursued by Swett and Richardson till they found themselves between a thicket and a swamp in a most exposed situation. Instantly, from an ambush on each side, great numbers rose with a war whoop, fired at once upon the two divisions, in which there were many young men or inexperienced soldiers, and the whole were throw into confusion. But though the ranks were broken the engagement was sharp and protracted. Richardson was presently slain and many on both sides shared the same fate. Swett fought the enemy hand to hand, displaying on the spot and in a retreat of two miles, great presence of mind as well as personal courage in repeated rallies of his men in his exertions to bring off the dead and wounded and in defense of his rear, upon which the savages hung with destructive fury. At last, wounded in twenty places and exhausted by loss of blood and by fatigue, he was grappled, thrown to the ground, and barbarously cut in pieces at the gates of the garrison. With this brave officer, fell sixty of his men, forty English and twenty Indians, being two thirds of the whole number in the engagement. Seldom is the merit of a military officer more genuine. Seldom is the death of one more deeply lamented. “ The history also states Benjamin Swett was the owner of Swett’s Tavern and that Black Point, where he was killed, is in the town of Scarborough, Maine.

John Swett, a resident of Wymondham Leicestershire, England, was at Newbury as early as 12 March 1642 according to the records. He took the Freeman’s Oath 18 May 1642. His family was apparently complete when he came from England¹, with his wife, Phebe, and four sons. A daughter probably died before their emigration. A shoemaker, John Swett died at Newbury 13 June 1651. Phebe (_____) Swett died at Newbury 6 May 1665.

John Swett was one of the proprietors of Newbury 7 December 1742; his grant being on the north side of the Parker River just East of the landing.

¹ *John Swett of Newbury, A Collection of Genealogical Research Papers*, by Ben H. Swett, Temple Hill, Maryland, 2006, was relied upon for some information given here. This book is recommended for any Swett family researcher.