

Rowley Historical Society

P.O. Box 41 Rowley, Massachusetts

SELECTIONS FROM THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES

REV. EZEKIEL ROGERS, founder of Rowley

Rev. Ezekiel Rogers was born at Wethersfield in 1590, settled over the Church at Rowley in 1619, and labored there until 1636 when he was, to use his own language, "suspended and driven into New England."

Rev. Ezekiel Rogers, 24th Pastor of St. Peter's Church, Rowley, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, England, organized a company of twenty families from Rowley and nearby towns and sailed on "John of London". Sailing from Hull dropped anchor in Boston Harbor. They arrived in Salem, Massachusetts in the fall of 1638. Between the time of his arrival and the settlement of this town some months elapsed and his company had increased to fifty-nine families.

The town was settled in the spring of 1639 during the session of the General Court in Boston. It was named "Mr. Ezechi Roger's Plantation Shalbee Called Rowley, Mass."

Rowley was laid out so that nearly all of the early houses bordered on the "Town Brook" or one of its tributaries. Originally the Town of Rowley extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Merrimac River and embraced the towns of Boxford (Rowley Village), Bradford (Merrimac Lands), Georgetown (New Rowley), Groveland, and a part of Middleton, and the present area of Rowley.

The first printing press to be used in the colonies was carried over on the "John" and set up in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

SOME EARLY INFORMATION ABOUT ROWLEY

Rowley has played an important part in this countries growth. In 1642, 40 armed men were sent out from Rowley, Ipswich and Newbury to disarm Passaconaway, "the great Sachem of all the tribes that dwelt in the Valley of Merrimac". Rowley has supplied the area with finished wool through the first fulling mill, lumber from it mills, small vessel during the 1700's, famous Ipswich clams and seafood, as well as scholars who founded new universities and an accused witch, Margaret Scott hanged during the height of the witch trials.

Rowley residents have been proud of its heritage. There have been founding celebrations over the years, the last being in 1989 featuring Rowley River activities, a grand 350th Ball on the Common, a huge parade, fairs on the common, old time movies, firemen's muster and of course the traditional ham and bean supper.

From the earliest use of the area by Native Americans, the Salt Marsh has been an important part of daily life on the North Shore. Salt marsh haying, farming, fishing, shipbuilding, and the arts continue to link our past to the present.

The area around Essex Bay was colonized in 1634 by fisherman, farmers, and their families. Rowley was founded in 1638. The region was once famous for ship and dory building, which peaked in the late 1800s. Most of the shipbuilding was in support of the local fishing industry as well as Gloucester, Essex, Ipswich and Newburyport.

Prior to colonization by Europeans, the Great Marsh area was said to be controlled by Masconomo. During the fair weather months the indians lived off the natural resources of the marshes as did the early settlers of Rowley. They harvested fish, a variety of shellfish and waterfowl in the marsh and estuaries. According to *The History of Byfield* by John Louis Ewell, who was a Rowley Historian; "When the white man came, all the territory from the Merrimack south as far as the North River of Salem and inland as far as Andover was subject to Masconomo, who (Governor) Winthrop terms "the Sagamore of Agawam ..."

Salt marshes were a tremendous asset to early colonialists and settlers. The marshes were divided between the families who were the first landowners of Rowley. Salt marsh hay was an essential part of survival and had to be shared evenly between landowners. Salt marsh hay was used for insulation, roofing, and livestock feed and bedding. Milking cows whose feed was supplemented with marsh hay produced richer milk. It was used for roofing and livestock bedding because it is so difficult to burn.

Salt marsh haying declined in the 1930s as farms switched primarily to upland hay as a result of the industrialization of the area. Today, salt marsh hay is almost exclusively used as mulch.