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TWO CHAPTERS  
IN THE  
EARLY HISTORY OF GROTON,  
MASSACHUSETTS.







BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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TWO CHAPTERS

IN THE

EARLY HISTORY OF GROTON,

MASSACHUSETTS.

BY SAMUEL ABBOTT GREEN, M.D.

BOSTON :  
PRESS OF DAVID CLAPP & SON.  
1882.



TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE BRAVE MEN AND HARDY WOMEN  
WHO FIRST SETTLED THE PLANTATION OF GROTON,  
THESE PAGES  
ARE INSCRIBED BY THE WRITER.

I PURPOSE to write a history of my native town, beginning with her earliest settlement and coming down to the present day. During many years she stood in the midst of a wilderness, and was exposed to all the trials of frontier life. She suffered much from hardships and want, as well as from the savage warfare of the Indians. Her original territory has been cut up, and now she is a mother of towns. In former years she exerted much influence in the neighborhood, and her experiences make a story worth telling.

[Reprinted from "The New-England Historical and Genealogical Register"  
for January and April, 1882.]



## CHAPTERS IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

### *No. I.*

**T**HE town of Groton lies in the north-western part of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, and is bounded on the north by Pepperell and Dunstable; on the east by Tyngsborough and Westford; on the south by Littleton and Ayer; and on the west by Shirley and Townsend. The First Parish meeting-house—or "the tall-spired church"—is situated in

Latitude  $42^{\circ} 36' 21.4''$  north,

Longitude  $71^{\circ} 34' 4''$  west of Greenwich,

according to the latest observations of the United States Coast Survey. It is distant nearly thirty-one miles in a straight line from the State House at Boston, but by the travelled road it is about thirty-four miles. The village of Groton is situated principally on one long street, known as Main Street, which was formerly one of the principal thoroughfares between Eastern Massachusetts and parts of New Hampshire and Vermont. The Worcester and Nashua Railroad passes through it, and traverses the township at nearly its greatest length, running perhaps six miles or more within its limits. It is reached from Boston by trains on the Fitchburg Railroad, connecting with the Worcester and Nashua road at Ayer, three miles distant from the village.

The original grant of the township was made in the spring of 1655, and gave to the proprietors a tract of land eight miles square; though subsequently this was changed by the General Court, so that its shape varied somewhat from the first plan. It comprised all of what is now Groton, nearly all of Pepperell, Shirley and Ayer, parts of Harvard and Westford, in Massachusetts, and a small portion of Nashua, in New Hampshire. The present shape of the town is very irregular, and all the original boundary lines have been changed except where they touch Townsend and Tyngsborough.

There were two petitions for the plantation of Groton, of which one was headed by Mr. Deane Winthrop, and the other by Lieutenant William Martin. The first one is not known to be in existence, but a contemporaneous copy of the second is in the possession of the New England Historic, Genealogical Society. The names appended to it vary in the style of handwriting, but they do not appear to be autographs, and may have been written by the same person. The answer to the petition is given officially on the third page of the

paper, and signed by Edward Rawson, secretary of the colony, which fact renders it probable that this is the petition actually presented to the General Court as the original one, after it had been copied by a skilful penman. This interesting document was found many years ago among the papers of the late Captain Samuel Shepley, by Mr. Charles Woolley, then of Groton, but now of Waltham, and by him given to the Historic, Genealogical Society. It is written on the first page of a folio sheet, and the answer to it by the General Court appears on the third page of the paper. Near the top of the sheet are the marks of stitches, indicating that another paper at one time had been fastened to it. Perhaps the petition headed by Deane Winthrop was attached when the colonial secretary wrote the decision of the General Court, beginning, "In Ans<sup>r</sup> to both these petitions." The grant of the plantation was made by the Court of Assistants on the 25th of May, 1655—as appears by this document—though subject to the consent of the House of Deputies, which was given, in all probability, on the same day. In the absence of other evidence, this may be considered the date of the incorporation, which is not found mentioned elsewhere.

In early times, as a rule, the proceedings of the General Court were not dated day by day,—though there are exceptions to it,—but the time of the beginning of the session is always given; and in the printed edition of the "Records" this date, in the absence of any other, is frequently carried along without authority. For this reason it is often impossible to tell the exact day of legislation in the early history of the colony.

The petition is as follows:—

To the honored Generall Courte asembled at Boston the humble petion of vs whose names ar here vnder written humbly shoeth

That where as youre petioners by a prouidence of god haue beene brought ower in to this wildernes and liued longe here in: and being something straightned for that where by subsistance in an ordinarie waie of gods prouidence is to be had, and Considering the a lowance that god giues to the sunes of men for such an ende: youre petioners request there fore is that you would be pleased to grant vs a place for a plantation vpon the Riuer that runes from Nashaway in to merimake at a place or a boue a place Caled petaupaukett and wabansconceet and youre petioners shall pray for youre happy prosedings

WILLI<sup>m</sup> MARTIN  
 RICHARD BLOOD  
 JOHN WITT  
 WILLI<sup>m</sup> LAKIN  
 RICHARD HAUCEN  
 TIMOTHY COOPER  
 JOHN LAKIN  
 JOHN BLOOD  
 MATHU FARRINGTON  
 ROBERT BLOOD.

To the honored Generall Court assembled at  
Boston the humble petition of us whose names  
are here under written jointly & severally

That whereas at your petition by a providence  
of god have bene brought over in to this wilderness  
and lived long here in: and being humbly  
acknowledging for that respect by Publickance in  
an ordinary way of gods providence it to be  
had and thanksgiving to a lawer that god  
grants to the favor of man for ever an end:  
your petitioners request that you would  
be pleased to grant us a place for a  
plantation upon the River that runs from  
Nashua in to Mexinake at a place or a  
bout a place called Peter's creek and  
manly consent and your petitioners will  
pray for your happy prospering

William Martin  
Richard Blood  
John Will  
William Lakin  
Fitzgerd L'auon  
Timothy Gougeon  
John Lakin  
Peter Blood  
Mather Innington  
Robert Wood

The petition is written on the first page of the sheet, and the answer to it is given on the third page, which runs thus :

In Ans<sup>r</sup> to both these petitions The Court Judgeth it meete to graunt the peticone's eight miles square in the place desired to make a Comfortable plantacon wch henceforth shall be Called Groaten forme'ly knowne by the name of Petapawage : that M<sup>r</sup> Damforth of Cambridge w<sup>th</sup> such as he shall Aassociate to him shall and hereby is desired to lay it out w<sup>th</sup> all Convenient speede that so no Incouragement may be wanting to the Peticone's for a speedy procuring of a godly minister amongst them. Provided that none shall enjoy any part or porcion of that land by guift from the selectmen of that place but such who shall build howses on their lotts so given them once w<sup>hin</sup> eighteene months from the tyme of the sayd Townes laying out or Townes graunt to such persons ; and for the p'sent M<sup>r</sup> Deane Winthrop M<sup>r</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Tinker M<sup>r</sup> Tho : Hinckly Dolor Davis. W<sup>m</sup>. Martin Mathew Harrington John Witt and Timothy Couper are Appointed the selectmen for the sayd Towne of Groaten for one two yeares from the tyme it is layd out, to lay out and dispose of particular lotts not exceeding twenty acres to each howse lott, And to Order the prudentiall affaires of the place at the end of which tyme other selectmen shall be chosen and Appointed in their rooms : the selectmen of Groaten giving M<sup>r</sup> Danforth such satisfaction for his service & paines as they & he shall Agree ;

The magist<sup>r</sup> haue past this w<sup>th</sup> reference to the Consent of their brethren the depu's hereto

25 of May 1655.

EDWARD RAWSON Secrety

The Deputies Consent hereto

WILLIAM TORREY Cleric.

An Answer to both thes<sup>e</sup> petitions. The Court Judgeth it meete to graunt the  
 petitioners eight miles square in the place desired to make a comfortable  
 plantacon wch henceforth shall be called Groaten forme'ly knowne by  
 the name of Petapawage: that M<sup>r</sup> Damforth of Cambridge w<sup>th</sup> such  
 as he shall associate to him shall and hereby is desired to lay it out w<sup>th</sup> all  
 convenient speede that so no incouragement may be wanting to the  
 petitioners for a  
 speedy procuring of a godly minister amongst them. Provided that none  
 shall enjoy any part or portion of that land by gift from the selectmen  
 of that place but such who shall build howses on their lotts so  
 given them once w<sup>hin</sup> eighteene months from the tyme of the  
 sayd Townes laying out or Townes graunt to such persons, and for  
 the p'sent M<sup>r</sup> Deane Winthrop M<sup>r</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Tinker M<sup>r</sup> Tho: Hinckly Dolor  
 Davis W<sup>m</sup>. Martin Mathew Harrington John Witt and Timothy Couper  
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 particular lotts not exceeding twenty acres to each howse lott, And  
 to order the prudentiall affaires of the place at the end of which tyme  
 other selectmen shall be chosen and appointed in their rooms.  
 The selectmen of Groaten giving M<sup>r</sup> Damforth such satisfaction  
 for his service & paines as they & he shall agree. The magist<sup>r</sup>  
 haue past this w<sup>th</sup> reference to the consent of their brethren the depu's  
 hereto  
 Edward Rawson Secrety  
 25 of May 1655.

The Deputies Consent hereto  
 William Torrey Cleric.

The entry made in the General Court Records, by Secretary Rawson, at the time of the grant, is substantially the same as his endorsement on this petition, though it gives some of the names appended to the other petition. It begins as follows :

" In Ans<sup>r</sup> to the peticon of M<sup>r</sup> Deane Winthrop M<sup>r</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Tincker M<sup>r</sup> Tho: Hinckly &c & of Lieu Wm Martin Timothy Cooper &c The Court Judg<sup>th</sup> it meete to Graunt " etc. (iv. 204.)

The record of the House of Deputies is also practically the same, though there are a few verbal discrepancies. It begins :

" There beinge a pet. p<sup>r</sup>ferd by M<sup>r</sup> Dean Winthrop M<sup>r</sup> Tho: Hinckley & divers others for a plantation vpon the riuer that Runs from Nashaway into Merimacke called petapawage & an other from some of the Inhabitants of Concord for a plantation in the same place to both which the Court returned this answer that the Court Thinkes meet to graunt " etc. (iii. 462.)

The following letter from the Honorable J. Hammond Trumbull, whose authority in such matters is unquestioned, gives the meaning and derivation of the Indian name of the town.

HARTFORD, Dec. 22, 1877.

MY DEAR DR. GREEN.—*Petaupauket* and *Petapawage* are two forms of the same name, the former having the locative postposition (*-et*), meaning "at" or "on" a place; and both are corruptions of one or the other of two Indian names found at several localities in New England. From *which* of the two your Groton name came, I cannot decide without some knowledge of the place itself. I leave you the choice, confident that one *or* the other is the true name.

"*Pootappog*," used by Eliot for "bay," in Joshua, xv. 2, 5, literally means "spreading" or "*bulging* water," and was employed to designate either a local widening of a river making still water, or an inlet from a river expanding into something like a pond or lake. Hence the name of a part of (old) Saybrook, now Essex, Conn., which was variously written *Pautapaug*, *Poattapoge*, *Potabauge*, and, later, *Pettipaug*, &c., so designated from a spreading cove or inlet from Connecticut River. *Pottapoug* Pond in Dana, Mass., with an outlet to, or rather an inlet from, Chicopee River, is probably a form of the same name. So is "Port Tobacco," Charles County, Md. (the "*Potopaco*" of John Smith's map), on the Potomac.

But there is another Algonkin name from which *Petaupauk* and some similar forms *may* have come, which denotes a swamp, bog, or quagmire,—literally, a place *into which the foot sinks*; represented by the Chippeway *petobeg*, a bog or soft marsh, and the Abnaki *potepaug*. There is a *Pautipaug* (otherwise, *Pootapaug*, *Portipaug*, *Patapogue*, &c.) in the town of Sprague, Conn., on or near the Shetucket river, which seems to have this derivation.

If there was in (ancient) Groton a pond or spreading cove, connected with the Nashua, Squannicook, Nisitisset, or other stream, or a pond-like enlargement or "bulge" of a stream, this may, without much doubt, be accepted as the origin of the name. If there is none such, the name probably came from some "watery swamp," like those into which (as the "Wonder-Working Providence" relates) the first explorers of Concord "sunke, into an uncertaine bottome in water, and waded up to their knees."

Yours truly,

J. HAMMOND TRUMBULL.

The last suggestion that the name came from an Algonkin word signifying swamp or bog, appears to be the correct one. There are many bog meadows, of greater or less extent, in different parts of the town. Two of the largest,—one situated on the easterly side of the village, and known as Half-Moon Meadow, and the other on the westerly side, and known as Broad Meadow, each containing perhaps a hundred acres of land,—are now in a state of successful cultivation. Before they were drained and improved, they would have been best described as swamps or bogs.

It is to be regretted that so few of the Indian words have been kept to designate towns and other places in Massachusetts. However much such words may have been twisted and distorted by English pronunciation and misapplication, they furnish now one of the few links that connect us with prehistoric times in America. "Nashaway," mentioned in the petition, is the old name of Lancaster, though it was often spelled in different ways. Mr. Trumbull has also given us some interesting facts in regard to this Indian word, which I copy from an essay by him in the second volume of the "Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society":

"NASHAUE' (Chip[pewa], *nássawai* and *ashawivi*), 'mid-way,' or 'between,' and with *ohke* or *auk* added, 'the land between' or 'the half-way place,'—was the name of several localities. The tract on which Lancaster, in Worcester County (Mass.), was settled, was 'between' the branches of the river, and so it was called '*Nashaway*' or '*Nashawake*' (*nashaue'-ohke*); and this name was afterwards transferred from the territory to the river itself. There was another *Nashaway* in Connecticut, between Quinnebaug and Five-Mile Rivers in Windham county, and here, too, the mutilated name of the *nashaue-ohke* was transferred, as *Ashawog* or *Assawog*, to the Five-Mile River. *Natchaug*, in the same county, the name of the eastern branch of Shetucket river, belonged originally to the tract 'between' the eastern and western branches; and the Shetucket itself borrows a name (*nashaue-tuk-ut*) from its place 'between' Yantic and Quinnebaug rivers."—Page 33.

The town is indebted for its name to Deane Winthrop, a son of Governor John Winthrop and one of the petitioners for its incorporation. He was born at Groton, Suffolk, in Old England; and the love of his native place prompted him to perpetuate its name in New England. He stands at the head of the first list of selectmen appointed by the General Court, and for a short time was probably a resident of the town.

A few years before this time, Emanuel Downing, of Salem, who married Lucy, a sister of Governor John Winthrop, had a very large farm which he called Groton. It was situated in what was afterward South Danvers, but now Peabody, on the old road leading from Lynn to Ipswich, and thus named—says Upham in his "History of Witchcraft"—"in dear remembrance of his wife's ancestral home in the old country" (I. 43). Downing subsequently sold it to his nephews John Winthrop, Jr., and Adam Winthrop, on July

23, 1644, when he speaks of it as "his farme of Groton." The sale is duly recorded in the Suffolk Registry of Deeds (I. 57).

Groton in Connecticut—younger than this town by just half a century, and during the Revolution the scene of the heroic Ledyard's death—owes its name also to the Winthrop family. New Hampshire has a Groton in Grafton County, which was called Cocker-mouth when first settled in the year 1766. Subsequently, however, the name was changed by an act of the legislature, in accordance with the unanimous wish of the inhabitants who approved it, on December 7, 1796. Some of its early settlers were from Hollis, New Hampshire, and others from this town. Vermont, also, has a Groton, in Caledonia County, which received its charter on October 20, 1789, though it was settled a short time before. The first comers were from Berwick, Maine, and of Scotch descent. Why the town was so called I am unable to say, unless it was that the fair fame and reputation of the one in Massachusetts had rendered the name auspicious. New York, too, has a town called Groton, situated in Tompkins County; and Professor M. M. Baldwin, in an historical sketch of the place, published in the year 1868, gives the reason for so naming it. He says:

"At first, the part of Locke, [New York,] thus set off was called Division; but the next year [1818], it was changed to Groton, on the petition of the inhabitants of the town, some of whom had moved from Groton, Mass., and some from Groton, Conn., though a few desired the name of York."—(Page 8.)

There is also a town of the name in Erie County, Ohio.

In the middle of the last century—according to the REGISTER, xxiv. 56 *note*, and 60,—there was a place in Roxbury sometimes called Groton. It was a corruption of Greaton, the name of the man who kept the "Grey Hound" tavern in that neighborhood.

Groton in England is an ancient place; it is the same as the Grotena of Domesday Book, in which there is a record of the population and wealth of the town, in some detail, at the time of William the Conqueror, and also before him, under the Anglo-Saxon King, Edward the Confessor. A nearly literal translation of this census-return of the year 1086 is as follows:

"In the time of King Edward [the Abbot of] Saint Edmund held Groton for a manor, there being one carucate and a half of land. Always [there have been] eight villeins and five bordarii [a rather higher sort of serfs; cot-ters]. Always [there has been] one plough in demesne. Always two ploughs belonging to homagers [tenants], and one acre of meadow. Woodland for ten hogs. A mill serviceable in winter. Always one work-horse, six cattle, and sixteen hogs, and thirty sheep. Two free men of half a carucate of land, and they could give away and sell their land. Six bordarii. Always one plough, and one acre of meadow [belonging to these bordarii]. It was then [*i. e.*, under King Edward] worth thirty shillings, and now valued at forty. It is seven furlongs in length and four in breadth. In the same,

twelve free men, and they have one carucate; it is worth twenty shillings. These men could give away and sell their land in the time of the reign of King Edward. [The Abbot of] Saint Edmund has the soc, protection and servitude. Its gelt is seven pence, but others hold there."

This extract is taken from the fac-simile reproduction of the part of Domesday Book relating to Suffolk (page 158), which was published at the Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, in the year 1863. The text is in Latin, and the words are much abbreviated. The writing is peculiar and very difficult to decipher. The same entry is found, in printed characters, in the second volume of Domesday Book (page 359), published in the year 1783.

Some idea of the condensed character of the record may be gathered from the following transcript from the beginning of the account of Groton, in which the matter within the brackets is what the Norman scrivener omitted: "Grotena[m] t[empore] r[egis] e[dvardi] ten[uit] S[anctus] e[dmundus] p[ro] man[erio]," etc. A carucate was a "plough land," or a farm that could be kept under tillage with one plough. It is variously estimated at from twelve acres to a hundred.

It is curious to note the different ways which the early settlers had of spelling the name; and the same persons took little or no care to write it uniformly. Among the documents and papers that I have had occasion to use in compiling a history of the town, I find the word spelled in nineteen different ways, viz.: Groton, Grotton, Groten, Grotten, Grotin, Groaten, Groaton, Groatton, Grooton, Grotton, Grouton, Groughton, Growton, Growtin, Groyton, Grauton, Grawten, Grawton, and Croaton. From the old orthography of the word, or rather want of it, it may be inferred that formerly its pronunciation varied; but at the present time natives of the town and those "to the manner born" pronounce it as if spelled Gráw-ton. This method appears to hold good in England, as the Reverend John W. Wayman, rector of the parent town, writes me, under date of August 13, 1879, that "The local pronunciation is decidedly Gráw-ton. The name of the parish is described in old records as Grotton, or Growton." I learn from trustworthy correspondents in the American towns of the name, that the common pronunciation of the word in each one of them is Gráw-ton.

The following paragraph is taken from the "Groton Mercury" of June, 1851, a monthly newspaper edited by the late George Henry Brown, post-master at that time:

"We have noticed amongst the mass of letters received at our Post Office the word GROTON spelled in the following different ways: Grotton, Grawton, Graton, Grotown, Groutown, Growtown, Growtan, Growten, Growton, Gratan, Grattan, Grewton, Grothan, Graten, Groten, Grouton."



*No. II.*

THE daily life of the founders of Massachusetts would be to us now full of interest, but unfortunately little is known in regard to it. The early settlers were a pious folk, and believed in the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. They worked hard during six days of the week, and kept Sunday with rigid exactness. The clearing of forests and the breaking up of land left little leisure for the use of pen and paper; and letter-writing, as we understand it, was not generally practised. They lived at a time when printing was not common and post-offices were unknown. Their lives were one ceaseless struggle for existence; and there was no time or opportunity to cultivate those graces now considered so essential. Religion was with them a living, ever-present power; and in that channel went out all those energies which with us find outlet in many different directions. These considerations should modify the opinions commonly held in regard to the Puritan fathers.

The sources of information relating to the early history of Groton are few and scanty. It is only here and there in contemporaneous papers, that we find any allusions to the plantation; and from them we obtain but glimpses of the new settlement. The earliest document connected with the town after its incorporation is a petition now among the Shattuck Manuscripts, in the possession of the New England Historic, Genealogical Society, which contains some interesting facts not elsewhere given. All the signatures to it are in the same hand-writing as the body of the document; but those of the committee signing the report on the back of the petition are autographs. The report itself is in the hand-writing of Joseph Hills. The document is as follows:

Bost: 16: 3 m<sup>o</sup>: 1656

To the Right Wo<sup>th</sup> the Gou,<sup>r</sup>no<sup>r</sup> the wo<sup>th</sup> Deput Go,<sup>r</sup>no<sup>r</sup> and Magistrates with the Worthy Deputies of this Hono<sup>r</sup>d Court

The humble Peticon of Certein the intended Inhabitants of Groten,  
Humbly Sheweth

That yo<sup>r</sup> Peticon<sup>rs</sup> haueing obtained there Request of a Plantacon from this honored Court, they haue made Entranc therevppon, and do Resolue by the Gracious Assistants of the Lord to proceed in the same (though the greatest Number of Peticon<sup>rs</sup> for the Grant haue declyned the work) yet because of the Remoteness of the place, & Considering how heavy and slowe it is like to be Carried an end and with what Charge and difficulties it willbe Attended yo<sup>r</sup> Peticon<sup>rs</sup> humble Requests are

1 That they be not nominated or included in the Country taxes vntill the full end of three years from these p<sup>ts</sup>: (in which time they Account their expenc will be great to the building a house, procureing and maintaining of a minester &c, with all other nessessary Town Charges: they being but few at present left to Carry on the whole worke) and at the end of the term, shall be redy by gods help to yeald their Rates according to their Number & abillitie & what shall be imposed, vppon them

2 That they may haue libertie to make Choyce of an other then M<sup>r</sup> Danford for the Laying out their town bounds because of his desire to be excused by reason of his vrgent ocations otherwise, and that they be not strictly tyed to a square forme in their Line Laying out

So shall yo<sup>r</sup> Peticon<sup>s</sup> be incorridged in this great work, and shall as duty bindes pray for yo<sup>r</sup> happiness and thankfully Rest

yo<sup>r</sup> humble Servants

DEAN WINTHROP

DOLOR DAVIS

WILL. MARTIN

JN<sup>o</sup>. TINKER

RICHARD SMITH

ROBERT BLOOD

JN<sup>o</sup>. LAKIN

AMOSE RICHENSON

In Ans. to this Petiçõn wee Conceiue it needfull that the Town of Groton be freed from Rates for three years from the time of their Grant as is desired.

2<sup>d</sup> That they may Employ any other known Artist in the room of M<sup>r</sup> Danfort as need shall be.

3<sup>d</sup> That the forme of the Town may A little varie from A due Square According to the discreçõn of the Comitte.

21. 3<sup>d</sup> m<sup>o</sup>. (56)

DANIEL GOOKIN

JOSEPH HILLS

JOHN WISWALL

The Deputyes approue of the returne of the Comiittee in answer to this petitiõ & desire the Consent of o<sup>r</sup> hone<sup>rd</sup> magists. hereto

WILLIAM TORREY Clerke

Consented to by the magists

EDWARD RAWSON Secret

[Endorsed for filing:] Grotens Peticon | Entrd & x<sup>s</sup> secured p<sup>d</sup> 8 | 1656

Bapt. 163 m. 1676

In the Right <sup>of</sup> the Hon<sup>ble</sup> the 100<sup>th</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Court  
and Magistrates with the 100<sup>th</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Court  
Gen<sup>l</sup> Court

The humble Petition of Certain the intended  
Inhabitants of Groton,

Sheweth

That the Petitioners having obtained their Request of  
a Plantation from this honored Court, they have  
made Entrants thereupon and do solemnly by  
Oath assistants of the Lord to proceed in the same  
(though the greatest number of Petitioners for the Grant  
have desired the work not because of the remoteness  
of the place considering how heavy and slow it is  
to be carried and with great charge & difficulty  
it will be attended. the Petitioners humble Request is

- 1 That they be not nominated or included in the County  
taxes until the full end of three years from the date  
(in which time they do want the same will be great  
to the building a house procuring and maintaining of a  
stronger or with all other necessary Town charges they  
and at the end of the term shall be ready by Gods help to yield  
the rates according to the Number & abilities of each shall be  
made upon them)
- 2 That they may have liberties to make choice of an other place  
in Groton for the laying out their town bounds because of  
his original location otherwise that they be not strictly taken  
to a square form in their first laying out  
So shall the Petitioners be in readiness in their great need and  
shall as Duty binds pray for so happily and thankfully  
Rest  
the humble Servants

Joan Smith  
Solow Davis  
Will. Marton  
Jas. Conker  
Richard Smith  
Robert Blood  
Jas. Lakin  
Simon Johnson

An Anf. to this petition was conceived if needfull that the  
 Town of Groton be freed from Rates for thereby eas from  
 the burthen of their Grievance as is desired.  
 2<sup>d</sup> That they may enjoy any other known Privileg in the same  
 at or neare Dunstable as well shall be.  
 3<sup>d</sup> That the forme of the Town may be little vari'd from St Dun  
 square according to the Direction of the Comittie.

21.3<sup>d</sup> m<sup>o</sup>. (56)

The Deputyes answer of the returne Daniel Gookin  
 of the Comittie in answer to  
 this petition & desire of the  
 Town of Groton  
 Joseph Hills  
 Confuted to by the magist. William Cowy of Boston  
 Edward Lee

A FAC-SIMILE OF THE ANSWER, SOMEWHAT REDUCED.

Grotons Petition  
 Entred & registered  
 1659

A FAC-SIMILE OF THE ENDORSEMENT, FULL SIZE.

The next document, in point of time, connected with the history of Groton is a petition to the General Court from John Tinker, one of the original selectmen of the town. It is dated October, 1659, and preserved among the Massachusetts Archives (CXII. 120) at the State House. In this petition Tinker makes some indirect charges against his townsmen, of which the real nature can now be learned only by inference. It would appear that they had taken land in an unauthorized manner, and their proceedings in other respects had obstructed the planting of the town; and that he felt aggrieved in consequence of such action. Evidently the new plantation did not prosper during the first few years of its settlement. The petition reads thus:

Boston To the Hon<sup>o</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Court Assembled at Boston  
 3 m<sup>o</sup> The humble Petition of Ju<sup>o</sup> Tinker  
 1659 Humbly Sheweth that

With vnfaigned Respect to the good and welfare of Church and Commonwealth yo<sup>r</sup> Petitioner hath in deauored to answer the expectation and desires of this hono<sup>o</sup> Court and the whole Countrey In erecting setling and Caring an End the Affaires of Groaton, Granted and intended by this hono<sup>o</sup> Court for a plantation, which notwithstanding (all in vaine) it Continueth vnpeopled and soe Like to remaine vnless by this hono<sup>o</sup> Court some wise and Juditious Comittie be impowred to order and dispose of all

things there about, after which no doubt it will goe on and prosper, which is the humble desire and Request of yo<sup>r</sup>. Petitioner that see it may be, and that yo<sup>r</sup> Petitioner be admitted and appoynted faithfully to declare vnto and informe the said Co<sup>m</sup>itte, 1 what hath alledy bin done, 2 what are the Grounds and Reasons wherfore it Remaineth at the stay it doeth, being so much desired by so many and such Considerable persons as it is, and 3 what hee Conceiueith needfull to the further Confirming what is done according to Right to every person & Cause, and the settleing such due order as may inco<sup>r</sup>idly the Carying on of all things to a prosperous effect, vnto which yo<sup>r</sup> Petitioner shall redyly adress himselfe, as willing to submit to the good pleasure of this hon<sup>o</sup>d Court & such Authorized by them for such due satisfacon for all his Care time cost & paines in and about the said plantation as shall be thought meete and humbly begging the good fauo<sup>r</sup> of god to Rest vppon you shall ever Remaine to the hono<sup>r</sup>d Court and Country

Yo<sup>r</sup> humble Serv<sup>t</sup>JN<sup>o</sup>. TINKER

The co<sup>m</sup>itte having prsed this peticon, do Judge y<sup>t</sup> it wilbe very convenient that a Co<sup>m</sup>itte of 3: or more meet persons be nominated & impowred to Examine the pticulars therein menc<sup>o</sup>ned. and make returne of w<sup>t</sup> they find to the Court of Elec<sup>o</sup>n.

THOMAS DANFORTH  
ANTHONY STODDARD  
ROGER CLAP

21. (8) 59. The Depu<sup>t</sup> approue of the ret. of y<sup>e</sup>. Co<sup>m</sup>ittee in answr: hereto & haue Nominated M<sup>r</sup> Danforth M<sup>r</sup> Ephraim Child Cap<sup>t</sup>. Edw: Johnson to be their Committee desireing o<sup>r</sup> Hono<sup>r</sup>d magists [consent] hereto

WILLIAM TORREY Cleric.

Consented to by y<sup>e</sup> magists

EDW RAWSON Secret

It would appear from the writing on it that Tinker's petition was referred by the General Court to a special committee, who recommended that the whole matter be considered by another committee with larger powers, who should report to the Court of Election. In accordance with this recommendation, Mr. Thomas Danforth, Captain Edward Johnson and Ephraim Child were appointed such a committee. I have given their names in the order in which they are mentioned in the General Court Records (IV. 324), and not as they appear in the approval of the committee's return on the petition. The original report, made eighteen months afterward and signed with their autograph signatures, is now among the Shattuck Manuscripts in the possession of the New England Historic, Genealogical Society. It is dated May 23, 1661 ("23 (3) 1661"), and bears the official action of the House of Deputies and of the Magistrates. Edward Rawson, the colonial secretary, made his entry on the paper, May 29, 1661. In copying the document I have followed the General Court Records, as this version of the petition contains fewer abbreviations and contractions. The record-book has been paged differently at three separate times; the paging marked in red ink has been taken in this copy. The "Committees Returne ab<sup>t</sup> Groaten & Courts odr" are as follows:

Wee whose names are subscribed being Appointed & impowred by the Generall Court in octobe<sup>r</sup> 1659 for the examination of the proceedings about Groten plantation & the Intanglements that haue obstructed the planting thereof hitherto=hauing taken pajnes to travajl vnto the sajd place & examine the Records of forme<sup>r</sup> proceedings in that place as also the Capacity of the s<sup>d</sup> place for the entertaining of a meet number of persons that may Carry on the affairs of a Toune, doe App'hend (according to w<sup>t</sup> Information we haue had) that the place will Affoord a comfortable accomodation for sixty familjes at least that may subsist in a way of husbandry= And for such families as be there already planted w<sup>ch</sup> are not aboue four or five acres\* wee doe not finde their Interest in such lands as they claime is legall & Just nor yet consistant w<sup>th</sup> the Courts ends in their graunt of the sajd plantation.

And for the further encouragement of such as haue now a desire &c doe present themselvs as willing to plant themselves in that place,

Wee craue leaue humbly to leaue our poore app'hentions w<sup>th</sup> this Honored Court as followeth

1 That the old planters & their Assignes whose names are John Tincker Rich: Smith. W<sup>m</sup> Martin. Ri: blood Rob<sup>t</sup> Blood & Jn<sup>o</sup> Lakin that they reteine & keep as their propriety, (of such lands as they now clajme an Interest in) each of them only twenty acres of meadow twenty acres for the house lott ten acres Intervale land & ten acres of other vplands & that the same be sett out by a comittee so as may not vnequally prejudice such as are or may be their Neighbo<sup>rs</sup>

2 That the neere lands & meadows, be so diuided as may accomodate at least sixty familjes & for that end That the first diuision of lands be made in manner following viz<sup>t</sup> such as haue one hundred & fifty pounds estate be allowed equall w<sup>th</sup> the old planters aboue & that none exceed & that none haue lesse then ten acres for their house lott & five acres of meadow two & a halfe acres of Intervale & two & a half of other lands for planting lotts in their first diuission & that none be admitted to haue graunts of lotts there but on Condition<sup>s</sup> following viz<sup>t</sup>

1 That they Goe vp. w<sup>th</sup> their familjes w<sup>th</sup>in 2 yeares after their graunts, on penalty of forfeiting their graunts againe to the Towne & so many ten shillings as they had acres Graunted them for their houselots & that the like Injunction be putt vpon those aboue named as old planters.

2 That all towne charges both Civil & Ecclesiasticall be levyed according to each mans Graunt in this first diuision of lands for seuen yeares next Ensuing Excepting only such whose stocks of catle shall exceed one hundred & fifty pounds estate.

3 That the power of Admission of Inhabitants & Regulating the affaires of the sajd place be referred to a comittee of meete persons Impowred by this Court thereto, Vntill the plantation be in some good measure (at least) filled w<sup>th</sup> Inhabitants & be enabled regularly & peaceably to Carry on y<sup>e</sup> same themselves

4 That this Honoured Court be pleased to graunt them Imunitjes [from] all Comon & Ordinary Country charges not exceeding a single rate or a Rate & a half p Annū for three yeares nex<sup>t</sup> ensuing.

\* The word "acres" occurs at the end of a line in the manuscript records, and appears to be an interpolation. The sense does not require it, and the original copy in the library of the New England Historic, Genealogical Society does not contain it, though the printed edition of the General Court Records gives it.

5 That in Graunting of lotts children haue theire due Consideration w<sup>th</sup> estates theire paren<sup>ts</sup> giving securitje to defray y<sup>r</sup> charges of the place as is before p<sup>r</sup>misid.

THO DANFORTH  
EDWARD JOHNSON  
EPHR. CHILD

The Court Approoves of & doe Confirme the returne of the Comittee & doe hereby further orde<sup>r</sup> & Impower the aforesajd Comittee for the ends aboue mentioned vntill meete men shall be found amongst such as shall Inhabit there & be approved of by a County Court

(General Court Records, iv. 371.)

The next document, in point of time, found among the Archives (I. 21) at the State House and relating to Groton, is the following request for a landmark, which was wanted probably for marking cattle.

The Humble Request of Joseph Parker to the Honoured Governo<sup>r</sup> the Honourd magistrates & deputyes, Humbly Requests in behalfe of the towne of Grawton that the letter GR may bee recorded as the brand mark belonging to the towne I being Chosen Counstible this year make bolde to present this, to the Honoured Court it being but my duty, in the townes behalfe thus Hopeing the Honored Court will grant my request I rest yo<sup>r</sup> Humble Servant

JOSEPH PARKER

Boston: 31<sup>th</sup>: may: 1666

In answer to this motion the Deputies aprrove of the letters GR to be y<sup>e</sup> brand marke of groaten

WILLIAM TORREY Cleric

O<sup>f</sup> Honor<sup>rd</sup> magists consentinge hereto

Consented by the magists

EDWARD RAWSON Secret<sup>r</sup>

During this period the town was paying some attention to the question of marks for trees as well as for cattle. At a general meeting held on March 5, 1665-66, it was voted that there should be trees "marked for shade for cattell in all common hy wayes:" and furthermore that "the marke should be a great T." From various expressions found in the early town records, it would seem that the country in the neighborhood was not densely wooded when the settlement was first made. At a meeting of the selectmen held in the winter of 1669, an order was passed for the preservation of trees, but the writing is so torn that it is impossible to copy it. At another meeting held on January 13, 1673-74, it was voted that all trees of more than six inches in diameter at the butt, excepting walnut and pine, growing by the way-side, should be reserved for public works, and that the penalty for cutting them down, without authority, should be ten shillings a tree.

At a general town meeting on December 21, 1674, leave was granted to William Longley, Jr., to cut down three or four trees standing in the road near his farm and shading his corn, upon condition that he give to the town the same number of trees for mending the highways.







