

COLONIAL DAYS 1630-1730

The story opens in the early decades of the 17th century upon a most peaceful tidal estuary making up from the Sound. The Dutchman Block who sailed by here in 1614 called it Siccaneemos, the river of the Sachem. We call it the Mystic River. The Sachem was Sassacus, leader of the Pequot Indians. And the Pequots coming from out beyond the Hudson had conquered the area, overcoming the peaceful, native Mohegans.

As everybody knows, the Pilgrims and the Puritans had begun their settlements at Plymouth and Boston. Quickly, expeditions by sailing vessel along the coast began, impelled by the same strain of human curiosity that nowadays has sent men to the moon. Quite naturally some friction developed between these good people and the not so good Pequot Indians.

In 1630 from Plymouth, England, the ship *Mary and John* arrived at Nantasket and one of the passengers aboard was a man named John Gallup. He had had some military experience and it is surmised that he was hired to come over for the purpose of helping out in smoothing over some of the Indian friction.

In any event, he was a good mariner and one day in 1636, sailing along through Block Island Sound, he came upon his friend John Oldham's vessel which had just been pirated by some definitely unfriendly Indians. Gallup thereupon engaged them in what turned out to be the first maritime action in the New World. Poor Oldham was dead; Gallup severely punished the guilty pirates and hauled Oldham's vessel ashore. Helping his father in this adventure was young John. The rest of the Gallup family had followed the father over in the ship *Griffin*. This is the ship that brought such notables as Reverend John Cotton, Reverend Thomas Hooker and Reverend Mr. Stone. At the end of that voyage John Gallup Sr. had safely piloted the *Griffin* into Boston Harbor through a new channel that he had found, and achieved great distinction thereby. It makes a more romantic story, if it had happened as one historian has it, that the Gallup family came on the *Abigail* among whose passengers were Mrs. Margaret Lake and her two young daughters. One was Hannah Lake who a few years later became young John's wife.

Back on the shores of the River of the Sachems, (our Mystic) troubles with the Pequot Indians came to a head. In 1637 Captain John Mason, sent with troops from the three settlements along the Connecticut River, fell upon the Pequot Fort on the hill west of the Mystic and put an end to the Pequot domination.

Now our territory is beginning to be safe enough for settlement. John Winthrop Jr. had spotted a site on the west bank of the Pequot River (now Thames), and in 1644 he obtained a grant

from the Massachusetts General Court and the next year work commenced in laying out the plantation then called "Pequit" that became New London.

The elder John Gallup had died in 1650 having served the colonists well for 20 years. His son John, now married to Hannah Lake, a niece of John Winthrop's wife, came to New London to settle down. He applied for and was granted a lot "next to Stallion's cow-yard". (This lot is now the site of the new and modern Thames Plaza.)

By this time the Hartford Colonial fathers, feeling gratitude to citizens for services rendered began giving out grants of land.

Reverend Richard Blinman, the new minister, was awarded 260 acres on the east bank of the Mystic River. Ah, now we have finally completed the background and can converge our attention to this land. For the grant to Reverend Blinman is the land of the WHITEHALL farm and mansion that our story is all about.

At this point we have to say too that John Gallup got 300 acres just south of Blinman "in consideration . . . unto the services his father hath done for the country . . ."

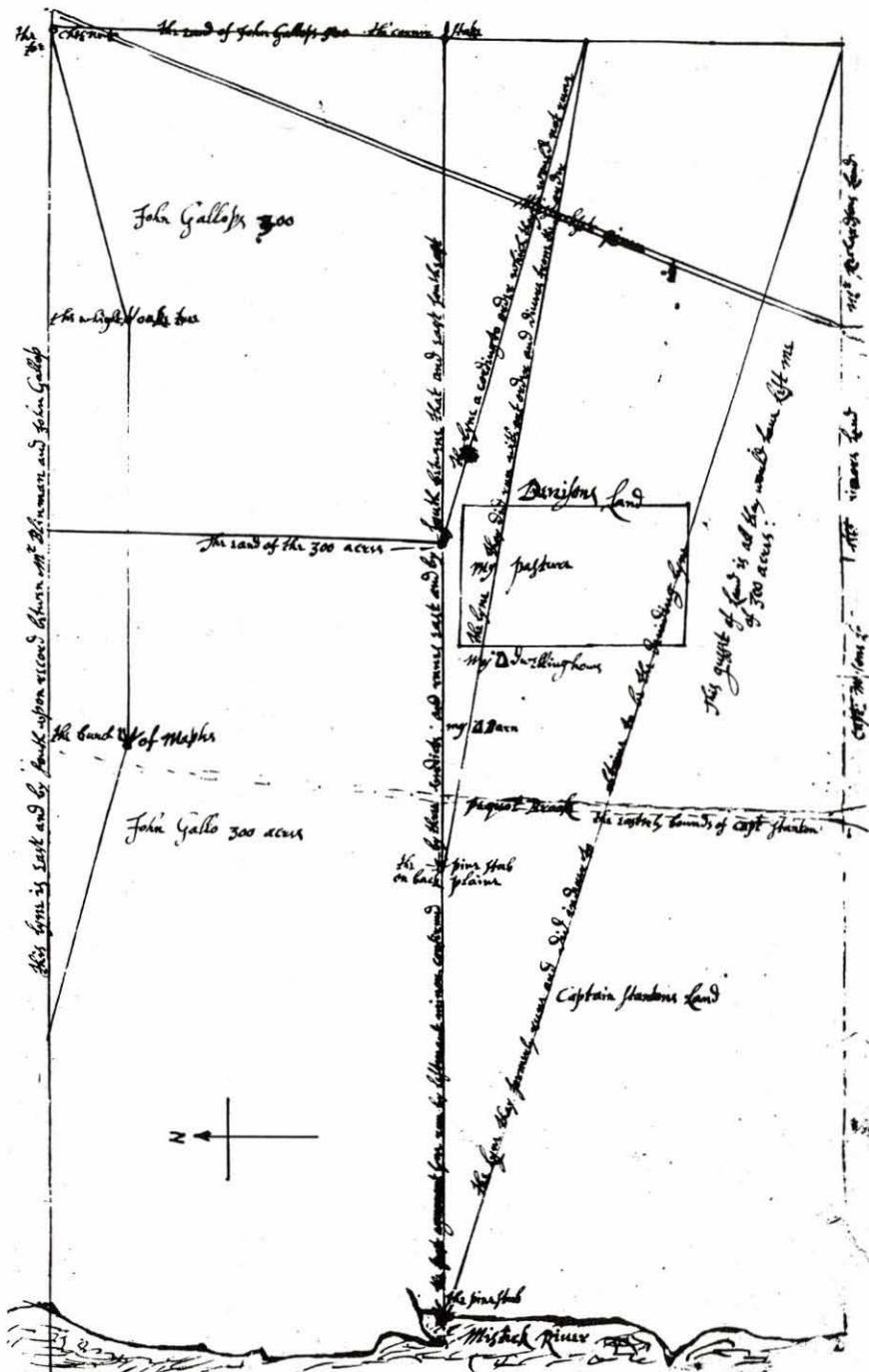
Here is a map, drawn by another notable neighbor, Captain George Denison, that shows the Gallup grant and just north, Blinman's.

Now we should follow the picture up and down the river. Nature was kind in some prehistoric geologic time in laying out this land, flat and smooth, free of rocks, with rich soil, easily tilled, clear of woods on the river side and then stretching off to the east on rising ground to hillside pastures and timberland. If our imagination fails to encompass all the products of this potential farmland, we can at least focus on those thousands of baskets of strawberries raised by farmers along the river in the first few decades of the 20th century. Down near Tryon, North Carolina is a region called the "Iso-Thermal Belt." Now the Mystic Valley doesn't quite claim that kind of climate, but its weather is tempered by nearness to the Sound and is not subjected to the extremes of temperatures experienced further inland.

So it is no wonder that John Gallup looked over from New London at all those green pastures and decided to sell out his "Thames Plaza" site next to the cow-yard, and move to the Mystic east bank.

Here he built a house. It is long gone and few now living can point even approximately to the depression in the hillside east of Elmgrove Cemetery where it stood.

This house-building took place in 1653 and John brought his wife and two children to live on the hillside looking out over the river through the old Pequot land toward New London and the



Captain George Denison's map — about 1652. Original Grants. The Blinman/Whitehall land is above — north of Gallup's 300 acres.

west. Here were born his seven other children. John Gallup took a prominent part in Colonial affairs; he was a Selectman of Stonington, representative at Hartford, shipowner, trader, Indian interpreter and Captain of the First Company of Connecticut forces.

During this period, say 1650-1675, the whole of Southern New England, organized loosely as the New England Confederation, was becoming pretty well settled by the English. The colonies of Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut and Rhode Island were brimming with activity. Altogether 30,000-40,000 settlers had acquired homes in settlements along the coast and up the length of the rivers — the Connecticut, Pequot (Thames) and the Mystic.

Do not think that these God-fearing, Satan-hating folks simply appropriated land from the native Indians. A real effort, under English law, was made to pay for and compensate the Indians for land. But trouble threatened. The differences between the Indians and the English in culture, religion, ethics and law concepts were too great to surmount. By 1675 resentment by the Indians culminated in the historic King Philip's War. Captain John Gallup led his company, together with four others all under Major Treat, to join the forces of the other colonies at Pettaquamscott on Narragansett Bay. And on Sunday, December 19, 1675, the troops marched through swamp to the Indian fort at Kingston. The resulting Great Swamp Fight is recorded exhaustively in history books. Captain John lost his life. He was buried with others in a mass grave near Smith's Castle at Wickford and memorial stones are there erected to his and the others memory.

But, back in New London and Mystic, life went on and folks were so thankful to be spared the fate of so many communities such as Deerfield and Simsbury, of which only blackened ruins remained at the end of King Philip's War in 1676.

Along the east bank of the Mystic River, grants had been laid out to pioneers of the caliber of Richard Blinman, Robert and Thomas Park, John Winthrop, Jr., John Gallup, Thomas Stanton, George Denison, John Mason. These names appear on the map shown on page 7.

Robert Park appears to have built a house which some historians believe was on the south slope of Quoketaug Hall.

Captain John Gallup's second son, Benadam married Esther Prentice of New London and with the help of his nephew John built a house on the eastern part of his father's grant, the Pequot-sepos Valley section, near Captain George Denison's house. This must have been somewhere around 1680-1690. As recently as 1900 the cellar and chimney were still visible as pictured in Grace Denison Wheeler's *Old Homes in Stonington*. Rev. Blinman had sold his grant to his brother-in-law, Thomas Park.

A third house in the neighborhood is really our central target. Thomas Park evidently lost interest in the Blinman property, was resident of New London in 1680, and subsequently went to Preston. He must have sold all or part of the Blinman land to his neighbors the Gallups.

William, the third son of Captain John Gallup, did construct a house there; and it was on the foundation of that house that Dr. Dudley Woodbridge later built the Woodbridge Mansion called WHITEHALL. Why was it called WHITEHALL? Research tells us that Thomas Park's forebears in England owned a home in Gestingthorpe, Essex called WHIGHT HOUSE. When Thomas acquired Reverend Blinman's acreage he may have applied the name to the property and, transformed to WHITEHALL, it prevailed over the years, finally becoming applied to the house rather than the land. Before we get to the building we should give some attention to what life was like late in the 17th and early in the 18th Century.

William Gallup was married to Sarah Chesebrough of Stonington and six children were born between 1688 and 1701. He was surely a devoted husband and father but must have been away from home some of the time as he was a prominent citizen; selectman, represented Stonington in the General Court, and an Indian interpreter.

The homestead was probably constructed of heavy, hand-hewn timbers, thick walls, some kind of interior plaster, narrow barred windows — maybe glass panes. In the center was the big stone chimney, wide fireplaces in three large rooms down, and maybe four upstairs. The cellar was low at one side because the foundation stones were laid on a ledge. But there was room for storage of barrels of cider, wild honey, vegetables and apples. Up in the garret were spinning wheels and looms, for the home manufacture of textiles was an important part of life in those days. Four daughters must have been a great help.

Furniture was rough by our standards; some was home-made such as tables, and some imported from England. Cooking and eating equipment consisted mostly of brass and iron kettles, pewter and wood plates and mugs, steel table knives, silver (!) and horn spoons, single tined forks — and this was one of the wealthier families of the times. William was Lieut. William Gallup and a member of the legislature, friend and protector of the conquered Indians.

Cooking was done in kettles over the fireplace fire; baking of bread in the chimney oven. Surely by this time there was a supply of flour to supplant the early pioneer's hand ground corn-meal. Game, fish, crabs, oysters, quohaugs were plentiful — from the nearby forests and the Mystic River. Eggs from the chicken yard, pork from the pig pen, wool from the sheep and milk from the