

WESTMORLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I hope this message finds you in good health and spirits. Spring is such a wonderful season, with blooming buds, lush green grass, and warm air.

We had a busy winter, starting with our Victorian Dinners just before Christmas, which were lovely as always. It was great to see our volunteers laugh, tease, and work together. The kitchen was bustling, the young men in suits and red ties serving our wonderful guests who were dressed up and ready for a fun evening.

Our Manager worked part-time this year while continuing his education and played a crucial role in writing grant applications. We are now waiting to see the results of our efforts. We have secured a \$5000 operational grant from Tantramar and have received the promise of two

more grants once we finalize our plans. One of these grants is intended for building an accessibility ramp for the St. James Textile Museum, but we will need carpenters to volunteer their time to augment the \$2000 grant we received. Anyone interested?

We also hired an engineer to assess the Payzant Card building, and we confirmed that the back wall was in decline. However, the front of the building is structurally sound. We are currently getting a quote for a "Building Conditions Assessment" on all four of our buildings. This will enable us to develop a strategic plan, a phased approach with a schedule, and a financial plan to have this work done over the coming years. Although it is a challenging task, it is

necessary.

Our AGM is coming up soon, and we hope to see you there. Please stay connected, and if you have any skills that you think you could volunteer to help with our future work, please let us know.

Warm regards,

Bonnie Chapman Roy

KEILLOR HOUSE MUSEUM —SPECIAL EVENTS

Keillor House Grand Opening – June 8th

Annual General Meeting – June 23rd

Victorian Garden Party – July 20th

Traditional Artistry Festival – August 10th and 11th

Friends of Keillor House – October 6th

Victorian Christmas Dinner – November 30th, December 7th

Connect with us on social media or visit our website to see upcoming special events!

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MUSEUM MANAGER'S REPORT

The warming weather is bringing with it increasing activity as we prepare for Keillor House Museum and St. James Textile Museum's 2024 opening season. At the time of writing in April we have just received confirmation of renewed funding from Young Canada Works and Canada Summer Jobs. I am happy to report that some of our exceptional student employees will be returning along with some new faces. While there are still some positions to fill, I foresee a particularly cohesive and productive team that will help get the most out of our peak season. This year we will also have a new seasonal position funded by the Thriving at Work Internship program, which is offered by Mount Allison University's Meighen Centre. With the excellent lineup of special events planned for 2024, I appreciate all the help I can get.

On August 10th and 11th of this year we will be hosting our first iteration of a new event, the Traditional Artistry Festival. This was inspired by the interactive, experiential learning we offer at St. James Textile Museum. Visitors enter the space and can try out carding wool, spinning yarn, and weaving with guidance from our knowledgeable staff. What if they could then have an introduction to even more traditional skills and techniques? After all, the Beachkirk Collection displayed at St. James goes beyond the textile arts to explore tools used in a variety of other skills. I have been working to build connections with artists and craftspeople who can help provide the same kind of engaging introduction to their specialized skill at an open and accessible event. Thanks to funding support provided by the Municipality of Tantramar I expect the Traditional Artistry Festival to be a success. Ideally it will become established as a recurring event that can bring previous visitors back to the site while incentivizing new ones. We hope to see you there!

I am also very excited about a special temporary exhibit that will be mounted later this summer, thanks to the vision and drive of Guillaume Adjutor Provost, professor of Fine Arts specializing in sculpture at l'Université de Moncton. This is an exciting opportunity that will bring the work of acclaimed Canadian sculptors into the different exhibit spaces within Keillor House. These sculptural artworks will be specially made for the temporary exhibit and will help foster new discussions and perspectives on some of our exceptional artefacts. We tentatively expect to hold the special exhibit opening on July 13th, but updates and further details will be posted in advance on our website and social media.

We look forward to seeing you at the Keillor House Museum 2024 Opening Day on June 8th. Let's have a strong start for another great year of history, heritage, and community at Dorchester's museums!

Keegan Hilz

AN APOLOGY AND A 'THANK YOU'

Probably the most dramatic incident in my article "Slavery in the Chignecto" that appeared in the February 2023 issue of the *Newsletter* was the tragic story of innkeeper Samuel Wethered whose buttocks were shot off in a bungled attempt to call in fire from Fort Cumberland onto the Eddy rebels who were whooping it up in his tavern. The plot was prematurely triggered when Wethered's slave girl inadvertently placed a candle in the designated window before Sam could do it himself, and he died in agony soon afterwards. In the article I identified Wethered as one of the New England Planters invited by Governor Lawrence to settle Cumberland Township and said that, unlike his fellow slave-owner, Senacherib Martyn, he was not an army officer. If he were a Planter his socio-economic background would have been that of an ordinary yeoman farmer of very modest means and that fact alone should have tipped me off that he was *not* a simple Planter, as slaves were quite expensive and generally affordable only by those who ate a little higher on the hog than ordinary farmers. This did give me pause, but owing to a misreading of one of my sources I nonetheless identified Sam as a Planter, and not an army officer. A week or so after mailing out the *Newsletter* I received a nice email from one of our WHS members, Jean *Wethered* McFarland of Prince George, BC, a descendant well versed in her family's history, pointing out my error and sharing valuable information on Samuel Wethered that I used in preparing the correction that follows. I am very grateful to Jean, because historians are in the truth business and really *hate* factual errors, and also because her email was welcome evidence that many WHS members do indeed read the *Newsletter* with interest and attention. Thanks to Jean, I can now tell you that Samuel Wethered (ca. 1738-1776) was a Massachusetts militia man and merchant from Boson who probably arrived in the Chignecto in 1755 with the expedition led by Robert Moncton and John Winslow that took Fort Beauséjour from the French and renamed it Fort Cumberland. Connected by marriage to prominent Fort Cumberland trader and Deputy Crown Surveyor John Huston, he probably did a bit of trading himself before, and maybe even after, acquiring the tavern. In any case, several sources identify him variously as an adjutant, a quartermaster, and a lieutenant at Fort Cumberland in 1759. So he was definitely here long before the Planters arrived in 1763. Although he was not one of them, for a time he did agree with many of them that Nova Scotia should join the American Revolution. Then he was persuaded by his brother-in-law, James Law, to return to his loyalty to the King, or at least to waffle on the issue. He was definitely a military officer from a socio-economic background more like that of the other Chignecto slave-owners, not a simple yeoman farmer who took a step up the status ladder by acquiring a tavern, as I had thought. As a footnote I can add from the research for my *Local Government in Early Westmorland County* (published by WHS in 2013) that the sacrifice of Sam's buttocks to the King's cause was rewarded posthumously in 1784 by the appointment of his son, Joshua Wethered, as the first Deputy Sheriff of newly erected Westmorland County. However, Joshua did not immediately succeed Ambrose Sherman as High Sheriff, but had to wait until some years after the death of Sherman's successor, Stephen Millidge, a "pure wool" Loyalist who had been a lieutenant in the New Jersey Volunteers. Apparently, even the faintest taint of treason took a long time to wear off in Loyalist New Brunswick. As compensation, however, Joshua's sword was handed down through the oldest males of the family until it came to Jean McFarland. Jean tells me that she is donating it to the Tantramar Heritage Trust, where it will no doubt find a good final resting place.

Gene Goodrich

GIDEON PALMER (1749-1824): FOUNDER OF A DORCHESTER DYNASTY

AMONG THE EIGHTEEN BOOKS THAT HELEN PETCHEY WROTE on various Dorchester topics is one entitled *The Palmer Brothers in the Chignecto* (1990). Like all her work, it is a well-researched and valuable pioneering contribution to local history, but it was meant only as an overview of the *many* prominent Palmers during the shiretown's heyday. Moreover, it gives pride of place to the first Gideon Palmer's sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons—the ones who made their mark in shipbuilding, commerce, and law. No doubt for lack of evidence available to her at the time of writing, Helen had to limit the founder of the Dorchester Palmer dynasty to one page. But help is on the way. In the course of my various researches into the Keillors of Dorchester, High Sheriff Stephen Millidge of Sackville, and local government in early Westmorland County I found quite a bit of information on the first Gideon Palmer and I also managed to dig up a fair bit more for this article, which offers a more complete account of the founder of the illustrious Dorchester dynasty than has hitherto been available. I hope that readers of the *Newsletter* as well as Helen will approve of the result.

Originally from Westchester County in the Bronx just northeast of Manhattan Island (it looks very different today!), Gideon Palmer (1749-1824) came to the Chignecto as a refugee who had fought in one of the Loyalist units supporting the British Army during the American Revolution, and paid the price. According to Howard Trueman's *The Chignecto Isthmus and its First Settlers*, a major source of local lore, that price was a very high one: "The largest part of Staten Island, New York, should have been the possession of the Palmers of Westmoreland," because, Howard thought, it had been owned in large measure by Gideon's grandfather as well as the parents and grandparents of Gideon's comrade in arms, Titus Knapp, who followed him into exile. "Palmer and Knapp must have found their loyalty expensive," Howard continued, "as their confiscated property is now worth untold millions." His source of information was an article published in the *Moncton Daily Times* by Charles Knapp, a Dorchester lawyer and grandson of Titus. (I know this thanks to WHS member Genie (Trueman) Coates's recent transcription and publication of her great-grandfather Howard's papers, *Tales from the Beauséjour Ridge*, which include the Knapp article. Genie's work is an excel-

lent read, by the way.) Knapp's article (through Trueman's use of it) fostered the impression that Gideon Palmer was one of the elite Loyalists who, like Amos Botsford, had once been very wealthy—with all that implies in terms of education and culture (Botsford was a Yale graduate)—before he lost his fortune to those dastardly revolutionaries. But sources more reliable than Charles Knapp's retelling of what appears to have been fond family tradition prove that this is not quite true. Gideon's deposition before the *Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists* in 1786 shows that, while far from being a poor dirt farmer, his socio-economic status was considerably more modest than what Titus Knapp's grandson thought it was. (I will talk more about his claims deposition a little later in this article.) It's true that Gideon's grandfather was a prominent British-trained lawyer, a Justice of the Peace, and a large landowner in Westchester County, but his father, Philip, was a younger son who had inherited a good deal less than what Grandpa John had owned, although it was still a very substantial farm. Gideon was the second son of Philip and actually owned no land himself although he farmed a portion of his father's lands, where he also kept a modest number of livestock. (He mentioned a horse, a cow, a pair of steers and six hogs in his claim.) He also owned at least three slaves, of whom more anon at the appropriate place in our story.

Like most Anglican gentry of New York, the Palmers were staunch upholders of the British constitution who advocated moderate reforms to give the colony more autonomy and influence with the Imperial Government, but not at the price of breaking the law or disrespecting proper authority. So, when the American Revolution broke out they were quickly pegged as Loyalists—or Tories, to use the patriot (revolutionary) term for them. In 1776 Philip's older brother (and hence Gideon's uncle) Lewis was charged with treason for refusing to swear allegiance to the newly declared Republic and to bear arms against the King. He was arrested, mistreated, and

jailed before escaping to the British garrison in New York City, while his eldest son (and Gideon's cousin) was hanged as a spy. His property, as well as that of two of his brothers (also Gideon's uncles, obviously) was confiscated, including some nice chunks of Staten Island. Gideon's father, Philip, was arrested "as one suspected inimical to the United States of America" and exiled to neighbouring Connecticut, a favourite dumping ground for Tories. However, in December 1776 he was paroled and allowed to return to Westchester "to take care of my interests and effects" on his word of honour that he would not take up arms or in any way badmouth the United States. Unlike Lewis, who broke his parole, Philip was as good as his word and so he outlived the Revolution, dying in Westchester about 1785, shortly after it ended.

But that doesn't mean that Philip was now a Patriot (as the revolutionaries flatteringly called themselves), or that he had in any way lost his sympathy for the Loyalist cause. Nor had at least four of his sons, namely Philip, Jonathan, Thomas, and Gideon, all of whom ended up as Loyalist exiles in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. I don't know much more about the first three, but that is not fatal to this article, as it was Gideon who came to the Chignecto, and is the focus here.

As a Palmer, Gideon was no doubt unsympathetic to the revolution from the outset but he may have been provoked into active opposition by the hanging of his cousin in August of 1777. In any case, that was the year he enlisted in a corps of Loyalist volunteers embedded within the famous DeLancey's Brigade raised by General Oliver DeLancey, one of New York's wealthiest and most prominent Loyalists. Gideon Palmer did not serve directly under General Oliver, but in an auxiliary troop variously known as the 'Westchester Light Horse', the 'Westchester Refugees', and the 'Westchester Chasseurs' that was put under the command of General Oliver's nephew, James DeLancey, in 1780. The Westchester Refugees, as I will call them here, were tasked with procuring beef cattle, lumber, and other supplies for the British Army, which occupied much of New York, including the city, soon after the Revolution broke out. They also took prisoners for exchange, captured British deserters, and protected critical posts as well as loyal residents and their property. A small cavalry force

supported by infantry, they did their work by raiding and plundering Patriot property and (especially) by rustling cattle. Needless to say, the Patriots thoroughly detested them and derisively called them 'cowboys', a term the Refugees adopted with pride. Hence they were sometimes also known as 'DeLancey's Cowboys'.

Gideon was twenty-eight when he joined the Westchester Refugees, almost certainly as a cavalryman. We can surmise this because at his hearing before the claims commission in 1786 he showed a certificate from James DeLancey that he had served five years as a Lieutenant. Although it was the second lowest rank of commissioned officer, it was also out of reach for the infantry auxiliaries. This proves again that, while he was of the gentry class, and not just an ordinary farmer, he was also not one of the elite like the DeLanceys, who monopolized the higher ranks. But he must have performed good service nonetheless. When the time came to go into exile Sir Guy Carlton himself, the Commander in Chief of what was left of British North America, commissioned him a Captain of the company of Westchester Refugees destined for Fort Cumberland. No further information about his doings as a soldier has come down to us, but we learn of another of his services to the Crown from his deposition before the claims commission. For a very hefty £250 he and another Loyalist jointly purchased the Patriot sloop *Fame* from the Vice Admiralty Court after it had been seized by a British warship and put up for sale. They sent it to the British Army at New York with a load of wood, which bade fair to be a profitable venture. Unfortunately, it was re-taken by a Patriot whale boat. Gideon also lost a smaller sloop taking forage to the British Army at the hands of another whale boat, but this time he was able to pay someone £32 for her re-capture. When the Patriots learned that he had left home to join the Westchester Refugees, a party of them came down to his father's farm, threatened his father's life, and plundered Gideon's livestock. There were definite risks in joining a Loyalist brigade.

When the revolutionary war ended in a British defeat and many Loyalists, especially those who had taken up arms against the new republic, were forced into exile, the British government decided to resettle them in Nova Scotia (which at the time included New Brunswick) and Canada (Quebec and Ontario). Those who had served in Loyalist corps were transported and (in theory at least) resettled in designated areas as units still organized along military lines. As noted above, Gideon was

promoted from Lieutenant to Captain and put in charge of one of the companies of the Westchester Refugees, which of course was no longer a fighting force; his duties would have been organizational and administrative. The Westchester Refugees were assigned to Cumberland County where lands were being prepared for them in Remsheg, later known as Wallace, and Cobequid. (That's how Westchester between Amherst and Oxford got its name.) Although it will only become relevant at the end of our story, this seems like the right place to insert that, even as the vessel that would carry Gideon and his company to Fort Cumberland (formerly Fort Beauséjour) was preparing to leave New York, Lewis Palmer and two other of Gideon's uncles and their families—which included thirteen slaves—arrived in Port Roseway, soon to be renamed Shelburne, on June 18, 1783. Sometime later, probably in 1785 (the exact date is unknown) Gideon's mother, now widowed, and his younger brother, Jonathan, joined them. Gideon's vessel, the brig *Thetis*, arrived at Fort Cumberland on July 15, 1783 and soon afterwards Gideon applied for one of the Remsheg grants. But there was a problem. The individual lots within the grant had not yet been surveyed and couldn't be finalized until they were. This did not happen until 1785 and so Gideon decided to stay at Fort Cumberland with many of the other single Refugees and not go on to Remsheg just to twiddle his thumbs waiting for his grant to be finalized.

Besides the uncertainty surrounding the Remsheg grants, another reason for staying at the fort was the potential he saw in the Chignecto. Here there were well-established farming communities around the fort as well as in Sackville and Amherst townships that offered opportunity to traders and storekeepers like fellow Loyalist exile (though not Westchester Refugee) Amos Fowler, who married John Keillor's sister, Ann. As a former vessel owner and somewhat gentrified farmer, this would have appealed to Gideon, perhaps rather more than mopping his brow in a Remsheg bush clearing land. But to get into trading and storekeeping he needed capital to get started. Soon after his arrival at Fort Cumberland the good news came that the British government would compensate Loyalists for property lost in serving the King's cause, and Gideon was sure that he was owed a substantial amount. But the claims process was slow (it dragged on until the end of 1786), and he needed to make a living now. Fortunately, there was another source of capital in the form of his

fellow Westchester Refugee and close friend Titus Knapp. Although only a Coronet, the lowest rank of cavalry officer, Knapp's family was wealthy and, as noted in the February 2024 issue of the *Newsletter* ("Slavery in the Chignecto"), he inherited a good deal of cash from his mother. Very few details have come down to us, but Howard Trueman learned from Charles Knapp that the two of them "commenced business as general traders." The only surviving documentary evidence of their partnership is an entry in the record of the Westmorland County Court of Common Pleas that in January 1789 "Palmer & Knapp" won a judgment of five pounds, eight shillings and nine pence (£5.8.9) plus costs of suit against an Augustus Parre for non payment of a debt. This is not much information on the business, but at least it confirms that it existed and that it lasted at least until 1789, and probably longer. Howard Trueman also had information that as a young man James Hewson—another of the Chignecto slave owners we met in the last issue of the *Newsletter*—"worked as a clerk for Titus Knapp and Gideon Palmer." So, the business must have been fairly substantial, and we know that Knapp, at least, did very well by it. He died in 1828 leaving one of the largest estates to appear in the Westmorland County probate records of that time. How long they remained in business together is another matter. Helen Petchey thought that Palmer sold out to Knapp when he moved to Dorchester "early in the 1800s," but the record of the General Sessions of the Peace for Westmorland County, which I transcribed and edited as the nucleus of my study *Local Government in Early Westmorland County*, shows that he had moved to Dorchester by January 1795, when the store and trading business' best days were probably still to come. So we can't simply assume that he shared in Knapp's prosperity as a trader and storekeeper.

But we do know that some new prospects opened up for him sometime in 1785. In 1784 New Brunswick was carved out of the original Nova Scotia to establish a separate province to accommodate office-seeking elite Loyalists, and the new government eagerly set about revoking some very large grants that the Nova Scotia government had made to important individuals. It planned to break them up into family-sized parcels for re-granting to Loyalist refugees as well as others who had shown loyalty to the Crown during the Eddy Rebellion of 1776. The big mover and shaker in this neck of the woods was elite Loyalist lawyer Amos Botsford, who

recruited eligible signers for a petition to revoke and redistribute a 20,000 acre grant on the east side of the Memramcook River that came to be called the Dorchester Grant. Among the signers, besides Botsford himself, his close associate, John Wheldon, and the latter's son-in-law, John Keillor, were Gideon Palmer and Titus Knapp, as well as a number of other Westchester Refugees from DeLancey's Brigade. In order to be eligible, Gideon and Titus had to surrender their grants in Remsheg. The other good news of the year was the announcement that Loyalist claims would finally be heard in Saint John in the fall of 1786.

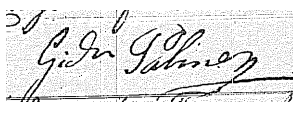
1785 or thereabouts was also the year that another opportunity came Gideon's way. We no longer have the exact date, but sometime between his arrival at Fort Cumberland in July, 1783 and the birth of his first child in 1786 he married Catherine Harper. He was now about thirty-six and probably thinking it was about time to get married (he hadn't had much time before). But if he may have rushed matters a bit he also ended up with an excellent choice. Her father was Christopher Harper, one of the most prosperous and prominent of the Yorkshire settlers. No doubt in sorrowful memory of his own father, he named his newborn son Philip. We have no hard evidence of where Gideon lived at this time, but it was probably at the fort along with other single Westchester Refugees, although if prosperity from his and Knapp's trading business was beginning to trickle in, he was probably thinking of more comfortable quarters. These he may have found on his father-in-law's nearby upscale farm, which, as we will see, he would soon own. But I have no proof of that.

One thing we do know for sure is that his hope of receiving a large compensation for his losses as a Loyalist was sadly disappointed. When his turn came to appear before the commission on November 6, 1786 Gideon put in a claim for £300, but he was awarded only a paltry £20. In the short section on Gideon in my *Local Government in Early Westmorland County* I speculated that this may have had something to do with the appearance of his signature on a counter-petition from some six hundred New York Loyalists that was sent in August 1783 to Sir Guy Carleton. The outraged counter petitioners were protesting an earlier petition of fifty-five particularly prominent and allegedly greedy Loyalists asking for 5000-acre grants in the best available locations (the standard grant was 200-250 acres) so that they could form a new landed elite. The request was

turned down, but several of the "infamous fifty-five" landed high positions in the New Brunswick government and I thought they may have 'had it in' for signers of the counter-petition. But this would be impossible to prove, while it must also be said that the new Loyalist government had already looked after Gideon in another way more than a year before the commission to settle Loyalist claims met in 1786. In the patent letter establishing New Brunswick as a separate province, dated May 18, 1785, Palmer was appointed one of the two coroners of Westmorland County. (The other was William Freeman, but before he took office the government changed its mind and replaced him with Yorkshire immigrant William Trueman Sr. of Point de Bute.) The coroner's duty was first to view the body of anyone in the county who had been slain, died suddenly, died in prison, or died of any unnatural cause, then to preside over an inquest to determine the cause of death, and finally to make a report (called a 'return') if there were criminal charges. He did not determine the cause of death by himself, but issued a warrant to the county sheriff, who then empanelled a jury to view the body at the site of the death and examine the evidence to hand at the time. The coroner chaired the jury and delivered the 'return' to the court that adjudicated the case. Although it may disrupt the flow of our narrative somewhat, I think it best to share everything I found out about Gideon's 'career' as a coroner at this point, as it will be awkward to insert it later in dribs and drabs.

The first recorded evidence of Gideon's services as a coroner comes from the record of the first court of *nisi prius* for Westmorland County, held in September, 1787. *Nisi prius* was the name of the *ad hoc* commission of judges from both the Supreme Court of New Brunswick and the county Inferior Court of Common Pleas that met periodically but sporadically in the various shiretowns of the province to adjudicate cases that were beyond the jurisdiction of the county courts. Here we learn that Gideon Palmer "returns an inquisition taken on the body of George Murphy suddenly drowned." It appears that Gideon had to wait nearly two years to collect his fees from the county treasurer. We find the following entry in the record of the General Sessions of the Peace. The wonders of modern digital technology allow me to reproduce it here, complete with Gideon's signature: "Received 11 July 1789 on order on the County Treasurer for eight pounds two shillings for sundry Inquests including

Coroners and Jurors fees to this Time.”

Gideon Palmer 

The record of the January 1790 General Sessions of the Peace shows that George Murphy's was not the only death requiring investigation during the early years of Gideon's coronership: "Allowed Gideon Palmer Esq., Coroner, Forty one shillings for Constables, Coroners & Jury Fees taking Inquisition on Body of George Nash." Even before Gideon collected his fee for the inquisition on George Murphy, in 1788 Coroner William Trueman was paid three pounds, fourteen shillings and sixpence for an inquisition on the body of Michael Burns. In July of 1789 one pound, eighteen shillings was "allowed to William Trueman Esq., Coroner, for Inquisitions taken, being a Balance to this Time." Assuming that the latter £1.18s was the final installment on the payment for the inquisition on Burn's death, we thus have a record of only three potentially suspicious deaths in the county between 1785 and 1790. This suggests to me that, not counting the alcohol-induced assaults and beatings that were a regular feature of contemporary masculine culture, there was otherwise little violent crime at that time. We may also note that both Palmer and Trueman had the affix 'Esq.[ire] attached to their names. This was because the coronership was a crown-appointed office, which, like that of High Sheriff and Justice of the Peace, conferred the status of a gentleman on the incumbent. But since business was not very brisk, and, like the Sheriff and Justices of the Peace, coroners were not paid regular salaries but only a modest fee for service, the position was not very lucrative. In fact, as far as the surviving record can show, after the three aforementioned cases, business for the Westmorland coroners dried up altogether until 1805, when the county's first and in many ways most bizarre murder created a bit of a bonanza for Gideon.

The murderer was Amos Babcock, a sincerely religious but tragically impressionable Shediac farmer. The 'murderer' was his estranged sister, Mercy Hall, whose husband had left her and who was now living in the Babcock household, but as an unwelcome outcast who didn't share the family's religious enthusiasm and, to make matters worse, didn't get along with Amos's wife. Amos and at least one of his daughters got caught

up in a frenzied revivalist movement that preached that the only means of salvation is a sudden indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that once the Spirit has taken possession of the soul the redeemed sinner can sin no more, even if he/she commits every crime and abomination in the book of worldly morality. The means to this happy state of grace was an unremitting series of long revival meetings led by overwrought preachers that sometimes went on for several days at a time, complete with graphic descriptions of the horrors of Hell followed by great groans of despair, loud outcries of joy, copious outpourings of tears, and hair-raising prophecies of the imminent end of the world. After a week or so of such ravings, on the night of February 13, 1805 Amos went completely off his nut and became convinced that he was the Angel Gabriel sent to announce the end of the world and to act as God's avenger even before the official arrival of Judgment Day. Convinced that Mercy had been consigned to perdition, he 'avenged' her transgressions by stabbing her to death in most hideous fashion. It was Gideon's unpleasant duty to observe that her death had resulted from a "wound to the centre of the breast, opening a gash two inches in breadth and six inches deep," followed by a blow to the back of the head causing a scalp wound "three inches long and half an inch deep," and a final fatal stab to the stomach "on the right side between the long ribs and the short ribs...six inches in length and five inches in depth." Those with a taste for the bizarre can read, or review, the details of the Babcock murder in the June, 2018 issue of the *Newsletter* ("Dorchester's First Jail and Hanging"). Here I can add that the record of the General Sessions of the Peace shows that Gideon was paid a total of twenty-four pounds and five shillings for his services as a coroner in the Babcock case, about the price of five steers or a good team of horses.

By the time of the Babcock murder Gideon had moved to Dorchester and, as we will see, was doing quite well, so he really didn't need his coroner's fees. The office was probably of more value to him for the prestige it conferred. But how well did he do in Westmorland Township before he moved to Dorchester? With the trading and storekeeping business and his marriage to Squire Harper's daughter, one would think he would have been doing quite well, and there is some evidence to support that conclusion. Charles Knapp stated that Gideon and Titus bought two adjacent

farms near the fort with houses on them, and that “the Palmer house was stone,” suggesting that it was upscale. If this was in fact his father-in-law’s house (there is no record of Gideon buying any land before 1789) it may well have been stone, although no trace of it remains today. Harper bought the farm in 1775 from John Huston, a wealthy New England trader who had built on it a large timber-frame “manor house fit for a gentleman.” Harper was one of the Yorkshire settlers most loyal to the King during the Eddy Rebellion of 1776 and also one of the most vociferous denouncers of the rebels. In retaliation they burned his house, forcing him to rebuild after the rebellion was put down, and the new structure could very well have been of stone. John Keillor’s father, Thomas, is known to have built at least two stone houses in the immediate area around the fort, and other Yorkshire settlers, such as the Truemans and Chapmans built brick ones.



Charles Knapp also said that Titus’ house was of wood and that it was “the biggest house in those parts and all distinguished visitors were entertained there. It was a huge three-story colonial type with large fireplaces.” In the February 2024 issue of the *Newsletter* (“Slavery in the Chignecto”) I included a photo of it in its last years. Although a ghostly weathering hulk, it still gave evidence of its former elegance, suggesting that Gideon was keeping some pretty good company. The only thing that made me hesitate in accepting Charles Knapp’s statement that Gideon had purchased the farm adjacent to Titus was the awkward fact that there is no evidence in the land registry office that he purchased any land near the fort before 1789, and if he had moved in with his wife’s folks, that would have been in 1785 or 1786. But I may be able to iron out this wrinkle

nonetheless. When he did purchase a farm it was in fact his father-in-law’s, the former Huston place, and Charles Knapp probably didn’t know this detail. Why Harper was willing to sell it at this time is a bit of a story in itself. Among the incendiaries who burned the ‘manor house fit for a gentleman’ were two members of the Ayer family of Sackville and after the rebellion was quashed Harper sued the perpetrators. In a series of bitterly contested lawsuits he won two mills located on the upper millstream and pond in Sackville Township later known as Morice Mill Pond and finally Silver Lake. He tried to run them from his home in Westmorland but such were the hard feelings on the part of the Ayers and their supporters that in 1787 they burned his Sackville house to the ground and set fire to his mills, which were only saved by a lucky rain. Worried about further depredations, Harper decided to move to Sackville in order to protect his property. So he was of a mind to sell the Huston place, which he had bought for £550, a very large sum at the time.

But there was another reason for the sale, namely a cash flow problem. Owing to intervention from higher authorities wishing to restore community peace after the Eddy Rebellion, Harper was able to collect only a part of what he had won in his lawsuits—which were against others besides the Ayers—and he must have had a lot of expenses rebuilding the house and outbuildings on the Huston farm and maintaining the Sackville mills. No other details have come down to us, but we do know that sometime before 1789 he took out a loan of £200 from a Halifax merchant and put up the farm as collateral. But he must have had trouble making the payments because the loan was in default and the lender won a judgment against him in court. To collect it county High Sheriff Stephen Millidge was ordered to seize the property and sell it at public auction (a standard method of debt collection in those days). The sheriff’s sale took place on April 13, 1789 and the highest bidder was Gideon Palmer at £245. This is where the certainty of documentary evidence ends and my surmise—or perhaps ‘speculation’ is a better word—begins. Normally at such sales the lender or his agent put in the winning bid, which was usually the amount of the loan. It appears that Gideon outbid him, which makes perfect sense since the property must have been worth considerably more than £245, even taking into account a possible fall in land values after Harper bought it in 1775. Was he taking advantage of his father-in-laws financial embarrassment or did Harper trigger the sheriff’s sale himself as a crafty maneuver to

provide Catherine with a dowry on the cheap while at the same time assuring himself of a nest egg for the move to Sackville, which he made that same year?

Whatever the case, by 1789 Gideon was married to Catherine Harper and living on the former Huston farm, which was located “within cannon shot of the fort,” evidently having prospered at least moderately from his partnership with Titus Knapp, whose house was definitely not far away. In the deed that Sheriff Millidge made out to him following the forced sale of the Huston/Harper farm Palmer is identified as “Gideon Palmer of Westmorland, *gentleman*.” This means that he was not an ordinary farmer—if he was he would have been identified as a *yeoman*—and it’s at least curious that he was not designated as a merchant, which merchants usually were in the deeds of the day. Whether he farmed or traded, or did both, the term ‘gentleman’ implied that he was a well-off man of leisure who didn’t work with his hands. Further evidence that he enjoyed a relatively high status in the community—although it was also true of others who were not designated as gentlemen in the deeds recording their land transactions—is/are the township/parish offices he was appointed to by the General Sessions of the Peace. As explained in detail in *Local Government in Early Westmorland County*, these were ranked in rough order, with some of them, particularly those of Commissioner of Roads, Surveyor of Roads, Overseer of the Poor, and (tax) Assessor conferring more prestige on the appointee than others such as Constable, Poundkeeper, or Hogreeve. Those considered the leading men in the township/parish tended to be appointed to the more prestigious offices and seldom if ever to one below Assessor. Gideon was first appointed as one of the Assessors in 1786 then rapidly moved up to Surveyor of Roads in 1788. He afterwards served as an Overseer of the Poor and again as an Assessor until he made it into the top rank as a Commissioner of Roads in 1791. This was followed by another appointment as Assessor in 1792, his last township/parish office in Westmorland Township before moving to Dorchester sometime before January, 1795.

1791 was also the year he had another encounter with Sheriff Millidge, this one not quite as profitable as the one that had netted him his father-in-law’s farm at a very good price. It seems that, sometime during the late 1780s, possibly to please his new bride, he bought a bunch of stuff from a Saint John merchant on credit but didn’t have the money on hand to make the payments. So he borrowed it from his brother-in-law Richard Wilson, a

former British Army officer who had also married one of Christopher Harper’s daughters. Wilson didn’t have enough cash on hand either, but he did have an account with a London merchant, as he, too, was a bit of a trader as well as an aspiring gentleman farmer. So he wrote what amounted to an early form of personal cheque in favour of Palmer, to be drawn on the London merchant house. Palmer then signed it over to the Saint John merchant but when the latter tried to cash it on his next trip to London it bounced, presumably because there wasn’t enough in Wilson’s account to cover it. After several attempts to collect, the Saint John merchant sued Palmer and Wilson jointly and won a judgment against them in the Supreme Court of New Brunswick. This triggered a sheriff’s sale of as much of their property as deemed necessary to pay the judgment. Gideon lost three cows, six steers, two mares, and a bull as well as his single most valuable piece of movable property, a twenty-three year old black male slave valued at £60. (Wilson lost two slaves, a mother and her daughter.) There is no way of knowing whether he had brought the slave with him from New York, or purchased him in Halifax, where there was a bit of a slave market. As mentioned above, we do know from his claim for compensation as a Loyalist that he owned at least three slaves back in Westchester County. One of them enlisted in the Queen’s American Rangers and was killed. Another ran away, but he got him back by paying a man £20 to capture him, while a third, bought from a fellow soldier, deserted to the Patriots. Gideon’s total loss was £129.15s., which probably didn’t bankrupt him, but it was a major financial blow nonetheless. More to the immediate point here, the fact that he had a slave—and slaves weren’t cheap—proves that he was indeed a man of some leisure who enjoyed a genteel lifestyle, while the fact that he had to borrow money for what appears to have been consumer spending suggests that he was not overly wealthy but nevertheless willing to spend somewhat beyond his means to maintain his standard of living.

Whether Gideon’s decision to move to Dorchester and finally take up the land grants he had been given there as a Loyalist in 1786 had anything to do with his losses

from the sheriff's sale, is impossible to say from the surviving evidence. We know only from the record of the General Sessions of the Peace that the move took place sometime between 1792 when he was appointed an Assessor in Westmorland Township/Parish and January 20, 1795 when he was appointed a Surveyor of Roads in Dorchester. A good guess would be that he moved in 1793 or 1794. His grant (number 16) included the bottom half of the pond that still bears his name, as well as a goodly portion of the creek that runs out of it and around Dorchester Island. In addition to 195 acres of pretty good upland, his grant also included some fifty acres of prime marsh closer to Dorchester Island. His farming operations must have been quite successful, as his heirs came to own a goodly part of the Dorchester marsh and regularly shipped cattle to the Saint John market. That his status in the community was quite high from the beginning is evident in the township/parish offices to which he was regularly appointed, essentially the same ones he had occupied in Westmorland. After starting with Surveyor of Roads in 1795, he was appointed a Commissioner in 1798, 1799, and 1801, along with Dorchester's most prominent resident, John Wheldon. He also served several terms as an Assessor and as an Overseer of the Poor, likewise typical of the leading men in every township/parish. No doubt his office of Coroner, which entitled him to add 'Esq.' to his name, also enhanced his status, especially during the Babcock trial, which was literally the talk of the town.

But perhaps even more of his cachet was due to his service in a famous Loyalist regiment that had fought the good fight against His Majesty's enemies. He also played a prominent role in the local militia, which he entered soon after it was formed in 1798 with the rank of Captain. Captains were the commanding officers of companies of about fifty non-commissioned men as well as several lieutenants in charge of smaller platoons. Several companies made up a battalion commanded by a Major or Lieutenant Colonel, but until 1809 there was only one battalion in the Westmorland County regiment. Among other administrative duties a Captain was supposed to ensure that everyone in his district liable for militia service was duly enlisted. This meant all men aged sixteen to fifty except members of the government, the Sheriff and his deputy, Coroners, Justices of the

Peace, ministers of the gospel, schoolmasters, certain millers and ferrymen, and Quakers. (As a Coroner Gideon was exempt, but exemptions could volunteer.) Captains were also to see to it that every enlistee kept at his own expense the required musket, bayonet, powder, and shot. Twice a year he had to muster his company at some convenient place and drill it in the various military exercises and once each year bring it to a general muster of all the companies in the regiment. In 1809 the Westmorland County Militia was divided into two battalions. The First mustered annually at Shediac, the Second at Cole's Island in Sackville. Gideon's company in the Second Battalion was now sometimes called the Dorchester Company and held its twice-yearly musters at Charters.

Of course the most serious of a Captain's duties was to lead his company in battle but Gideon was never called upon to perform it. The first Lieutenant Governor of the province, Thomas Carlton, took militia training very seriously, as there were some serious threats of an American invasion. But he returned to England in 1803 and his successors paid far less attention to it, sharing the general opinion that the defence of the colony (and its attendant expense) was primarily the imperial government's responsibility. As a result, the annual general musters, in particular, became far more successful (and popular) as social gatherings than as military training exercises. Crowds gathered around to admire the drills and uniforms, while boozing and boasting were much more the order of the day than matters military, although displays of manly pugnacity, especially in the mess hall, were often enough in evidence. One example of this involving Gideon Palmer has come down to us—it's the only detail we have about his militia service apart from the brief description of a Captain's duties offered above. The story—and it's a good one—was preserved by his second son, John, who was born in 1789 and lived to be a hundred. John told it, among many other things related to Dorchester's early history, to W.C. Milner, who repeated it in his well known *Early History of Dorchester and the Surrounding Area*, available in the Keillor House Gift Shop. Milner didn't date it, but if the event took place on Dixon's Island, as John assured Milner that it did, it must have been after 1809 when the Second Battalion was formed. Milner tells the story better than I can, so I will yield the podium to him [and enclose my own comments in square brackets.]

“It is related [that] at a general muster at Dixon’s Island, the officers were dining together, when an altercation arose between Capt. Palmer and Capt. Henry Chapman [son of the original Yorkshire immigrant and Captain of one of the seven companies in the Second Battalion], the one occupying a seat near the head of the table, the other near the foot. Capt. Chapman in his excitement shouted out to his brother officer in language more warlike than parliamentary: ‘You’re a liar.’ [In the gentlemanly tradition of military manners, calling another officer a liar was about the worst insult possible.] Capt. Palmer did not reply. He jumped up on the table, where his movements could not be hindered and made a dash at his opponent, clearing the table of its viands as he went. The results are not known beyond the fact that Capt. Palmer a few days afterwards paid £6 for broken dishes.” From this we can surmise that, in spite of his sixty-odd years, Gideon was still a man of some vigour, his martial spirit yet intact.

Although we don’t know much about Gideon’s farming operations we do have information on another of his enterprises, one that was characteristic of progressive and ambitious owners of the right kind of property. Like Amos Botsford of Westcock and William Trueman of Point de Bute, he built mills both for the convenience of the surrounding inhabitants and for his own profit. His Dorchester grant had the ideal location for a water-powered mill, and he took full advantage of it. Keillor Creek ran (and still runs) southeasterly through lands originally granted to John Keillor, his brother Thomas, and two others whose names don’t matter here, before emptying into the natural pond still known as ‘Palmer’s’. It was an ideal mill pond because at its southwest end it drained into another stream that snaked through some prime marsh, then around Dorchester Island before emptying into the Memramcook River. Still called ‘Palmer’s Creek’, and sometimes ‘Keillor Creek’, it was a great little stream for running a waterwheel because the pond that fed it maintained an abundant supply of water independent of rain or runoff, so that only a simple dam was required to keep the flow constant and only a simple breast-shot waterwheel was required to power the mill. There was no need for a large over-shot wheel or a long and expensive millrace to give it enough ‘head’. (For details on the various types of waterwheels and how they worked, see the article on mills in the June 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*.) Believe it or

not, we can know fairly precisely when Gideon built his mill. There was a concern that a mill, which required regular surges of water when operating, could flood neighbours’ adjacent property, causing not only bad relations with the neighbours but also expensive lawsuits. This apparently worried Cyprian Killam who owned a tract of marshland near Dorchester Island that was susceptible to such flooding. So to avoid trouble Gideon bought the property. By a deed dated March 24, 1802 Cyprian sold him “all my part of marsh in lot 17 on Memramcook River that may be overflowed by the said Palmer’s milldam...” and construction on the mill probably started soon after the deed was signed. In it Gideon is identified as a ‘yeoman’, a plain farmer, rather than a merchant or a gentleman. (He could have been called Gideon Palmer, Esq., but for some reason either he or the drafter of the deed decided not to do so.) This could be evidence that the lawsuit against him and Wilson had taken him down a peg or two, but I can’t be sure of that.

The deed does not mention (nor would we expect it to have) what kind of mill Gideon had in mind. The two most common were gristmills and sawmills and he most likely had those at some point during his lifetime. Certainly his sons did, while both a gristmill and a sawmill are noted near Palmer’s Pond on the well known Walling map published in 1862. But he also had another kind, namely a fulling mill, which was quite uncommon in this area at that time. It may even have been the first one in the Chignecto. As described more fully in the article on mills, a fulling mill powered heavy wooden hammers that scoured loose-woven ‘homespun’ woolen cloth in scouring vats, then pounded or fulled (felted) it into a thicker, more durable fabric. It was a great improvement over hand scouring—which involved washing the cloth in a foul mixture of fuller’s earth and stale urine—and hand fulling—which was done by beating the daylight out of it with a wooden club—so there was lots of potential business for a fulling mill. The problem, apart from the relative cost of construction for a smaller clientele than would have patronized a gristmill or sawmill, was that a fulling mill needed specialized knowledge to run it, ideally someone with experience in cloth making. By the time the deed with Cyprian Killam was signed Dorchester had just

such a man. He was Josiah Wood whose story we told in the June 2021 issue of the *Newsletter*. After working for a time in a cloth mill in Newport, N.S. this Connecticut Yankee, who was trained in weaving, fulling and dying back in his homeland, settled in Dorchester in 1801. Here he married Sarah Ayer and earned his living as an itinerant weaver, tailor, and schoolteacher. One of his pupils was Gideon's second son, John. Born as noted above in 1789, he still had a clear memory of the school he attended about 1805 (Wood died in 1809) when W.C. Milner interviewed him, probably in the 1880s. John also remembered that "Besides the school he (Wood) also ran a fulling mill which my father built for him near the shipyard in the creek." (This was the shipyard established by Gideon's son in 1854) Here we have some pretty good evidence that Gideon's first mill was a fulling mill, and that it was up and running not too long after the purchase of the piece of marsh from Cyprian Killam. Gideon probably engaged Wood's services as an itinerant weaver (the weaver would go to the homes of his clients and do up the weaving, sometimes staying for several days), got to talking with him about a fulling mill, and made a deal.

Better yet, we have documentary evidence that backs up John's statement, both as to the kind of mill it was and when it began operating. About May 1809 Josiah Wood died suddenly at the age of thirty-three leaving a very muddled estate that took several years to settle, with lots of creditors' bills still outstanding as well as debts owing to the estate. Naturally, this generated a lot of paperwork, much of which somehow got passed down to Josiah's very prominent grandson, Josiah Wood of Sackville, who bought William Crane's splendid stone mansion and re-named it 'Cranewood'. Years later, Cranewood was acquired by Mount Allison President Bill Crawford who, not wanting old junk kicking around, donated the estate settlement papers to the university library where I made their acquaintance, thanks to the expertise of University Archivist Rhianna Edwards. (Dr. Crawford also donated part of Wood's extensive library to Keillor House.) Among the creditors' bills still out-

standing when the first Josiah died was one submitted by Gideon Palmer dated June 1808. "To the rent of a Fulling mill, 2½ years at £25per year.....£62.10.0" It doesn't get any better than this. Now we know for sure that it was indeed a fulling mill, that it must have begun operating in 1805 or early 1806, and that Gideon charged Josiah a fairly hefty twenty-five pounds a year in rent. From documents preserved in the Trueman family fonds at Mount Allison (described in the February 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*) we know that its services included dying and pressing as well as scouring and fulling, and that customers came from all over the county.

What happened to the fulling mill after Josiah Wood died? John Palmer told Milner that "afterwards my father carried on the business," but I know that Gideon was not alone in this. Josiah's widow, Sarah, was a seamstress as well as a skilled business manager (she and Josiah ran a tavern-cum-convenience store in the courthouse) and she and her father had other help in the form of Palmer's oldest son, Philip, who married her about a year after Josiah's death. She and Philip carried on the tavern/convenience store business for some years before moving over to Sackville sometime around 1815-1818. That the fulling mill was still in the picture is proven by statements of account preserved in the Trueman family fonds for fulling, pressing and dying sent to Mrs. William Trueman in 1813 and 1814. How long the fulling mill continued to operate after that is impossible to say exactly, but the likelihood is that it was shut down when Philip and Sarah moved to Sackville. Some corroboration of this may be the sale of the old Benjamin Tower gristmill at Frosty Hollow to John and Oliver Barnes around 1815 and its replacement by a fulling mill shortly thereafter (see the article on mills in the June 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*). The Barnes brothers must have seen a business opportunity when the Palmer mill ceased operating. By this time Gideon was about sixty-six and maybe getting a little long in the tooth. He was probably not interested in sweating out his golden years in a foul-smelling fulling mill.

Gideon's Dorchester grant was already a good basis for his farming and milling operations but towards the end of his life he acquired more property in Dorchester, starting with ten acres of dyked marsh bought in 1814. This was followed by a very big purchase in 1818. In September of the previous year his daughter

Elizabeth married Ambrose Cole, who had decided to become a mariner despite having somehow acquired a tract of land, including marsh, down towards Dorchester Cape. Gideon bought the tract from the couple (Elizabeth was co-signer of the deed) for the very considerable sum of £900, giving them a nice nest egg. Also in 1818, he picked up another ten acres of dyked marsh that a widow was forced to sell to pay off her husband's debts. In 1820 he bought another fifteen acres of dyked marsh in Dorchester and two years later added another fourteen acres in Sackville as well as two lots of wilderness from the estate of his brother-in-law, Richard Wilson. These purchases were a substantial addition to his valuable Dorchester grant, which itself had been added to by another 575 acres granted to him and Philip in 1814. By 1822 he had built up a considerable estate, was now seventy-three, and must have been thinking about how to divide it among his heirs.

Estate building may also have occasioned the last episode of his life. According to Charles Knapp, Gideon always retained a certain nostalgia for his old home in New York, and Helen Petchey believed that "in old age" he made a trip there to see if he had any claim to his father's lands. I don't know what Helen based this on, but there is some corroboration in the surviving evidence. On July 23, 1824 Gideon made out his will and in it he describes himself as being "about to undertake a journey to the United States of America." I found no evidence as to how the claim was received, or if it was even filed, but I am pretty sure it would have been rejected out of hand. As is apparent from his statement to the claims commission in 1786, he never had any land of his own (something Helen didn't know). While his father seems to have retained possession by keeping his nose clean during his parole from Connecticut, he was a known Loyalist sympathizer, and Gideon, as well as a number of other Palmers had taken up arms against the United States. Even in 1824, when much water had passed under the bridge, this was unlikely to have been forgotten. In any case he must have left New York soon after arriving, which suggests that his case, if heard at all, was given short shrift. When he died on October 6 he was already back in Saint John, so there would hardly have been enough time in New York to have his claim heard, let alone settled. But clearly his heart was in the right

place, as he must have been hoping to be able to leave even more to his children. He was initially buried in Saint John's Old Burying Ground but, probably on Catherine's initiative, was re-interred in the Dorchester Methodist Burying Ground (now known as the Pioneer Cemetery). Catherine was a Methodist, while Gideon was an Anglican. But there was no Anglican cemetery in Dorchester at the time, and the Methodist one was appropriate because Methodists were still closely associated with the Anglican Church. Soon afterwards, Gideon's youngest son, also named Gideon, who was an Anglican churchwarden, established a family cemetery near the pond that he later deeded to the Anglican Church. It is now known as the Dorchester Rural Cemetery. His father was re-interred there (yet again) and a tombstone erected with these words on it: "Gideon Palmer, late a Lieutenant in Delancey's Corps. Died October 6, 1824, aged 75 years." Clearly, he and/or his family wanted him remembered as an active soldier in the famous Loyalist regiment, rather than as a Captain in the local militia. It appears that his nostalgia for his old homeland was more than just a figment of Charles Knapp's imagination.

Epilogue: Some of Gideon's Progeny

Although he died too soon to learn all the details, Gideon Palmer would probably have been proud of the way his children and grandchildren turned out. After marrying Josiah Wood's widow and partnering with her in running the tavern/convenience store (and probably the fulling mill as well) his oldest son, *Philip* (1786-1873), went on to become a Deputy Crown Surveyor, a Justice of the Peace, and a member of the provincial legislature as well as a very substantial farmer and businessman. His second son, *John* (1789-1889), was truly a man of parts. As W.C. Milner recounted in his *Early History of Dorchester*, "No... physical difficulty could daunt him... near the close of his life his energy and virility seemed as exhaustless as ever... At age ninety he ... cut a load of wood, loaded it, and took it to his door-yard unassisted. He busied himself in many employments. He cut down trees, cleared the land, raised cattle and crops, built mills, logged, steam drove and lumbered, built at least one vessel, was farmer, lumberman, fisherman, trader, shipmaster and soldier." Gideon's third son, *Gideon Jr.* (1808-1880) was only

sixteen when his father died but already showed promise of things to come. Gideon willed him his house and mill, which may have been a grist mill by this time. In 1854 Gideon II established a shipyard just below the mill on Palmer Creek and went on to raise three fine sons, Philip, Barlow, and Hiram. (The story of Hiram's only daughter, the talented and beautiful Nellie, was told in the September 2022 and February 2023 issues of the *Newsletter*.) Along with William Hickman and Robert Andrew Chapman they became the leading shipbuilders in Dorchester. The youngest son, Marcus (1814-1890), was only ten when his father died so Gideon had little opportunity to judge how he would turn out. But if he could have known, he would have been pleased. Marcus was another successful farmer and a very strong Methodist who eventually became a Deacon in that Church. This was probably the influence of his mother, whose Methodist Yorkshire roots were very deep.

Besides the four boys, Gideon and Catherine raised five girls. The oldest, Nancy (1788-1875) married John Trueman (son of William Trueman II of Pont de Bute) in 1805. Josiah Wood, or perhaps more likely his wife, Sarah, made her wedding dress. Sally and Catherine married two local farmers. Elizabeth married a mariner, while Mary remained single. She may have been the one disappointment among the brood: she was thirty-three when Gideon drew up his will and obviously headed for spinsterhood. He left her only a paltry fifteen shillings. In compensation, or perhaps revenge, she lived to be eighty-one. All the children except Sally, who died at forty-seven, lived to a ripe old age, most into their eighties. None except Sally died before reaching seventy-two, while John was a longevity champion in anyone's league. Their mother died at sixty-four but her father, Christopher Harper, had the longevity gene, lasting until age eighty-five. Gideon didn't do too badly either, dying at seventy-five. So, Milner was right to say that John Palmer "came of good stock."

Gene Goodrich



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