

**Notes on
The Peterson Family of Ship Builders, 1743-1825
Compiled by Malcolm C. Hamilton**

Captain John Peterson (1743-1823) and his son Captain Levi Peterson (1769-1825) were men of significance in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—shipbuilders, ship owners, and captains. Their influence was widespread in the area of Bath and New Meadows, Brunswick, Maine.

John Peterson built and owned ships and shipyards, sawmills, gristmills, stores, and residences. He was representative to the Massachusetts General Court, 1790-1792 and was substantially responsible for the digging of a canal at the head of the New Meadows River, originally intended to connect to Merrymeeting Bay. He was the father of eleven children, one of whom was also a prominent shipbuilder and ship's captain. Their family roots went back to the 1620 pilgrims.

Peterson Mayflower/Pilgrim Connections

Early histories of Bath and Brunswick reported that John Peterson, the primary focus of this article, had pilgrim or *Mayflower* connections—"a descendant of old Pilgrim stock."¹ But none elaborated on those connections. The first ancestor we find was also named John Peterson (1636-1718) and was said to be the son of a Cornelius Peterson, about whom nothing is certain.^{2 3}

Our John Peterson's old Pilgrim heritage can be determined, however. The *Mayflower* connection starts with George Soule, who was born in England between 1595 and 1602 (most often listed as 1601) and died in 1677. His origins have not been discovered, though many of his descendants have looked. George was a passenger on the *Mayflower* as a servant to the family of Edward Winslow (1595–1655). The nature of that servitude, whether indentured or not, is unexplained. But we do know that George Soule married Mary Buckett or Beckett in 1625 or 1626 in Plymouth. She was born in

¹ Reed, p. 312.

² John Peterson Sr. 1636–1718 – Augusta Cemetery, webtrees.net.

³ Tree, AmericanAncestors.org.

1605 and died before January 22, 1679, in Duxbury, Mass. She had arrived in 1623 at Plymouth on the ship *Ann*.

George Soule and family moved to *Duxborrow* (Duxbury), Old Colony, in 1637. He served as a deputy to the Plymouth Court for a number of years beginning in 1642.⁴

One of the nine children of George and Mary was Mary Soule (1644-1718). John Peterson (1636-1718) of Duxbury married Mary Soule about 1664.^{5 6 7}

This is the *Mayflower* connection!

Their son Jonathan Peterson (1674-1744) married Lydia Wadsworth (born 1678; died 26 May 1756 in Pembroke, Plymouth, Mass.).⁸ Jonathan and Lydia's son, another Jonathan Peterson (1706-1765), married "Jael" or Jane Dillingham (1724-1784).

Jonathan and Jane's son John Peterson, (born Duxbury, Mass., 1743 or 1744; died Portsmouth, R.I., June 24 or 25, 1823) is the Captain John Peterson who is the focus of this article. He married Sarah Hewett or Hewitt (born 1745, Marshfield, Mass. on September 30, 1765).⁹

On March 14, 1770, John Sprague of Duxborough, Old Colony, yeoman, and Deborah his wife sold land in Duxborough to John Peterson.¹⁰ This may be the start of John's land holdings and the building of his wealth.

John Peterson at Brunswick, Massachusetts (Maine) 1783 – 1797 (or 1798)

In 1783 at the age of 40, John Peterson of Duxbury, Massachusetts, moved his family to Brunswick, Maine, then in the state of Massachusetts, and settled at Howard's Point on the shore of the New Meadows River. The family consisted of his wife Sarah, eight children, and his cousin Nehemiah Peterson.

⁴ mayflowerHistory.com/soule/.

⁵ mayflowerHistory.com/soule/.

⁶ John Peterson Sr. 1636–1718 – Augusta Cemetery, webtrees.net. Note: This source says Jonathan probably died before the will was made.

⁷ Note: Wheeler (p. 847) says that the earliest known ancestor of our John Peterson was Joseph Peterson (1667-1751), of Duxbury, Mass., whose son Jonathan died in 1756 but was the grandfather of the John Peterson who came to Brunswick in 1783. That is likely a mistake, as others later point to Jonathan Peterson (1674-1744) as the grandfather.

⁸ <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Peterson-250> .

⁹ American Ancestors indicates he was born 1/3/1744, Duxborough, Mass.

¹⁰ Warren Family genealogy, Ancestry.com.

In Brunswick, they lived in a two-story house that Peterson built. Tradition says that the Customs office also had its quarters at this place.¹¹ Peterson kept a store in the building opposite and also in a building near the river. The house was later [in 1878?] occupied by Bartlett Adams (b. December 27, 1814).¹²

Peterson had a grist mill, double sawmill, two shipyards, and two stores and is said to have used his house as an Inn. He built vessels, extensively carried on the West India trade, and built a dam and tide mills on the river. He was one of the most enterprising citizens of the time.^{13 14 15}

The 1790 U.S. Census showed John Peterson living in Cumberland County (Brunswick). His household included 25 white males over the age of 16; 4 under the age of 16, and 5 females. His wife and 4 daughters were the 5 females. Four of their sons were under age 16, and 3 sons were over age 16. There were also Peterson himself and his cousin Nehemia, age 18.^{16 17} The remaining 20 males over age 16 were probably laborers in his shipyards and stores, whom he boarded.

He also became involved in local politics. At the annual Brunswick town meeting in 1788, Captain John Peterson, Deacon Dunning, and Nathaniel Larrabee were chosen a committee to petition the General Court for a modification of the "Fish Act."¹⁸

Note: Massachusetts ratified the United States Constitution and became the 6th U.S. state on February 6, 1788.

¹¹ Vose, p. 86.

¹² Wheeler, p. 847.

¹³ Owen, pp. 132-133

¹⁴ Reed, p. 312.

¹⁵ Wheeler, p. 847-848.

¹⁶ 1790 U.S. Census, p. 269, line 63.

¹⁷ Nehemiah Peterson, AmericanAncestors.org.

¹⁸ Wheeler, p. 132.

John Peterson's family

John Peterson's wife, Sarah Hewett (Hewitt, Hewit), was born in 1745, in Marshfield, Massachusetts. They were married on September 30, 1765.¹⁹ She bore him eleven children. Eight of them were born in Duxbury, Massachusetts; the remaining three, in Brunswick, Maine (then Massachusetts).^{20 21 22 23 24}

Born in Duxbury:

John, (born July 30, 1767; died 1830, age 63); married Jennett Shaw (1770-1830).

Levi, later Captain, (born Nov. 7, 1769; died July 27, 1825, age 55; married 1796, Mary, daughter of Col. John Reed [died 1797], and Rachel [Thorne; daughter of William] of Topsham.) (see fn. 21, p. 104) Find more on Levi and Mary following.

James, later Captain, (born December 30, 1771, died 1806, age 35; married March 21, 1799, Jenny Patten [daughter of Robert and Margaret (Hunter) Patten]). Master of ship *May Flower*, Feb. 13, 1795.

Child: James Hewett Peterson, (12/29/1799-; married in Topsham, September 30, 1833, Mary Patten Hunter. (fn 21; fn. 22.)

Later, Jane Peterson, widow of Capt. James Peterson of Bath, married Capt. Abraham Butterfield of Charlestown, Feb. 11, 1806.

Nancy, (born March. 20, 1774) likely the Nancy "Paterson" of Topsham whose intentions with Jacob Merrill of Bowdoinham were published on September 1 or 17, 1811. (fn. 21, p. 189.)

Charles, (born August 20, 1776; died before. May 16, 1802, at age 25) Built [?] 1801 Schooner *Topsham Beauty*, 108 tons, 68'1 length, 19' 10 ½ beam, 9' 1 ¼ depth. Builder ?; owner and master: Charles Peterson. Built in Topsham. (fn. 23, 24.)

Claims against the estate of Charles Peterson were requested in the *Jenks' Portland Gazette* on Monday, July 5, 1802, via a notice dated May 16, 1802, to be directed to John Peterson.

Hewett, (born September 19, 1778) (No further record found; likely died young.)

Sarah "Sally," (born January 20, 1781; married Robert Bosworth, Jan. 16, 1799.)

¹⁹ Vital Records, 1620-1850, AmericanAncestors.org.

²⁰ Lemont p. 78.

²¹ *Vital Records, Topsham, Maine*, p. 197; Vol.1. p. 104.

²² Baker, p. 965.

²³ Lemont, p. 56; calls it just *Topsham*.

²⁴ Wheeler, p. 848.

Their child, John Bosworth, became a merchant at Bath.

Daniel, (born Oct. 28, 1783) In the 1850 Census, he was age 66, mariner; residence at Portland, Maine, in a boarding house with wife Sarah, 56; also, a resident in that household was Lucy H. Peterson, 21. When he was 42, he and sister Lucy sold the Peterson property in Bath to Maj. Thomas Harward in 1825

Born in Brunswick

Abigail, (born September 17, 1786); later Mrs. Abigail P. Stewart, Bath. U.S. Census 1850 showed the value of real estate she owned: \$1,500. Children: Charles A. age 25, mariner; Mary A. age 23.

William, (born March. 4, 1789) The 1850 Census finds him as “Patterson,” a farmer at age 61 in Dresden, Maine,. Value of his real estate, \$2000. Wife Abigail, age 50. Children: Amanda, 25; William, Jr. 22; Angeline, 16; Mary E., 12; Emma 8.

Lucy, (born April 27, 1791; died November 27, 1853) married Stephen Joyce.

On September 13, 1791, John Peterson requested from the Selectmen of Brunswick an abatement on the tax on “one of my vessels, as she was cast ashore last Christmas Day on Cape Cod, and by that accident, I lost the value of one year’s earnings of said schooner.”^{25 26}

Captain John Peterson served as a representative to the legislature from Brunswick in the 10th, 11th, and 12th Massachusetts General Court.²⁷

10th Massachusetts General Court (1789–1790); 11th Massachusetts General Court (1790–1791); 12th Massachusetts General Court (1791–1792)

²⁵ Wheeler, p. 332.

²⁶ Baker, p. 162.

²⁷ Wheeler, p. 917.

The Peterson Canal

A resolution was adopted at the Brunswick 1786 town meeting that it was the unanimous desire of the town that a canal be cut through from New Meadows River to Merrymeeting Bay.²⁸

[See the map attached that shows the length of the course via the Kennebec past Bath and around Cape Small to get logs to Howard's Point mills on the New Meadows—as opposed to the much shorter distance if there were a direct canal. Also see Note below from Owen's history, page 23.]

In the same year, 98 residents of Cumberland and Lincoln counties (Brunswick and Bath) petitioned the General Court for permission to dig such a canal between the New Meadows River and Merrymeeting Bay.²⁹

On March 5, 1790 the General Court of Massachusetts (legislature) passed an act authorizing the creation of a corporation to build the canal—with no tolls.

On June 17, 1791, the General Court passed a 2nd Act that authorized tolls and named the following as proprietors of the New Meadows canal [yet to be built]: “Isaac Snow, Nathaniel Larrabee, and Benjamin Dunning, esquirers; and messieurs John Peterson, Phillip Higgins, Benjamin Ham, Nathaniel Sprague, John Dunlop, and Samuel Gross.” The Act provided that the canal was to be opened within four years from its date and was “to be kept open for the passing of boats, rafts, and other watercraft and for all persons who may wish to pass or transact business therein.” (fn. 29.)

In 1791, a corporation was formed for the purpose of constructing a canal to unite the waters of Merry-Meeting Bay with those of New Meadows River. It was intended for the transportation of lumber, and not a passage for vessels. The canal was built, but probably it did not answer the purpose for which it was intended on account of there not being a sufficient difference of level between the two ends, and the experiment was soon abandoned.^{30 31 32}

In 1792, Capt. John Peterson, with others, dug [or caused to be dug] a canal from New Meadows River intended originally to connect directly to Merrymeeting Bay.³³

²⁸ Wheeler, p. 132.

²⁹ Owen, p. 132-33; Gerber, *cited in* Lovetere, p. 112.

³⁰ Wheeler, p. 555.

³¹ Vose, p. 90.

³² For a look at the canal in modern times watch:

History Room Live: A Journey Along the Peterson Canal - YouTube

³³ Lemont, p. 8, says 1798.

On March 22, 1793, the General Court passed an Act that recognized the canal had been opened the previous year:

“The proprietors having at considerable expense opened a canal from New Meadows River to the waters of the River Kennebec a little below Merry-Meeting Bay, at a place called Welch’s Creek, it having been found impracticable to open a canal directly to the bay aforesaid, by reason of rocks and other obstructions, this variation from the original authority should be sanctioned and the provisions of the original act to apply to the canal as actually built.”³⁴

It is probably no coincidence that during this period John Peterson was serving as representative to the General Court where he could influence legislation concerning the building of such a canal.³⁵

Even though this canal did not answer his expectations, for some time he ran logs through it to his mills on the New Meadows. His business increased, and as early as 1797 or 1798 he removed to Bath.

Prof. George Vose (b. 1831), a civil engineer, who taught at Bowdoin College and MIT, observed that the accounts of the building of the Peterson Canal as found in the standard histories (Reed, Baker, Owen, Lemont, Sewell) “are so diverse and inaccurate that readers of all will have to assume that there were at least two different canals, built at different times, and in different places.” He notes that General Joseph Sewall’s *History of Bath* (p. 220) says it was excavated in 1779, 12 years before it was even chartered.”³⁶ Vose’s own account is based substantially on his knowledge of the actual location of the canal as it existed at the time he was writing (1901).

Henry Owen writes that the so-called Peterson Canal was an ambitious undertaking of the last decade of the 18th Century. He notes that among those named Proprietors of the New-Meadows Canal, John Peterson was not listed as Esquire at this time.

Tolls prescribed for use of the canal were these: For every boat of the burden of one ton, 9d, and in the same proportion for vessels of greater or less burden, but not exceeding 6s for any such vessel or boat; for every 1000 feet of boards in rafts, 4 1/2d, and in the same proportion for all other kinds of lumber.

See Owen’s detailed description of the exact course of the canal from the Head of the New Meadows to Little Whigby, Little Whiskeag, or Welch’s Creek as an Appendix at the end of this article.³⁷

³⁴ Gerber, *cited in* Lovetere, p. 112.

³⁵ Wheeler, p. 917.

³⁶ Vose, p. 93.

³⁷ Owen, pp. 132-133.

For a look at the remains of the canal in modern times and more information on its construction, watch the 2021 Sagadahoc Genealogical and History Room Live program by Brenda Cummings [Assessor of the City of Bath, Maine] and Timothy Richter: “Twice a Day Island; A Journey along the Peterson Canal.”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NuULJrjEXQ>

John Peterson in Bath, Massachusetts (Maine), 1797-1809

Prior to John Peterson’s arrival in Bath, Captain Simeon Turner had purchased the old Joseph Heath farm from the Heath heirs in 1783. The property included the King’s dock and the house on the promontory at the foot of what would later be named Harward St. The house was built in 1732 by Joseph Heath and has survived to modern times. It is sometimes called the old Peterson house or the house at King’s dock, at 1463 Washington St.^{38 39}

Note from Ned Baxter of Sagadahoc Preservation, Inc. “In Book 4 Page 152-153 at Wiscasset (Lincoln County Courthouse) is a lease from Joseph Heath of Fort Richmond to John Tarp & Robert Hazard for 10 years with required improvements. Joseph Heath got the 400 acres as payment for doing the survey for the [Kennebec] proprietors. A document I read in Alfred seemed to indicate that Heath got his wrist slapped because he had not settled people on his holding nor made the improvements as required. Tarp & Hazard had to clear and fence 10 acres of land during the 10 years.

“Heath granted an additional 10 year lease to John Tarp, who I think became his agent. There were several deeds to parcels granted by John Tarp.

"All that his mesuage or tenement; situate lying or being at a place commonly called and known by the Long Reach in said Kennebeck River & bounded on said river easterly, on James Lendal northerly, on a salt creek at Stevens carrying place westerly, and upon the heirs of Robert Gutch southerly containing about four hundred acres, with eight acres of salt marsh and two pieces of fresh meadow contained therein, and a new dwelling house standing thereon."

The new dwelling was the original building that became the Peterson House. There were two houses on the property and two men had leased the 400 acres.

³⁸ Owen, p. 93, and others.

³⁹ Bibber, p. 29.

Turner built ships at his shipyard near the old King's dock. The British had been driven out eight years earlier in 1775, by Dummer Sewall and a group of armed citizens of Bath, who marched via Harward St. to the King's Dock, where the British were trimming and storing logs for masts and spars to be shipped to England. Sewall famously demanded that they cease and leave at once, which they did.

In 1797, John Peterson purchased the property from Captain Turner. It was then comprised then of 148 acres and included the house and his shipyard at King's dock. It extended from the Kennebec to Whiskeag Creek and possibly beyond to the New Meadows River.

His son, Levi, and then new wife, Mary "Polly" Reed (married in 1796 or 97) occupied the house on the promontory. (See more on Levi and Mary Peterson to follow.)

The two-story mansion that Peterson built for himself was on Harward St. overlooking his shipyard. In 1895, it became the Old Couples' Home, but was demolished in the 1930's after elderly residents were moved to the new Old Folks Home that was built around 1935 at Hospital Point in the South End of Bath.

The confusion about whether John Peterson moved to Bath in 1797 or 1798 may have been caused by the difference between the purchase date and the time it took to complete his new house on Harward St.

John Peterson's son Daniel inherited the property. The 1814 assessor records had a farm, buildings, and mill (at Whiskeag) all valued at \$2500. In 1814 Daniel sold a half interest to his sister Lucy Peterson. In 1825, Daniel and Lucy sold their combined interests to Major Thomas Harward,⁴⁰ who carried on business extensively in building and sailing ships.^{41 42 43} (See also the map in Owen, p. 90.)

The historian Parker McCobb Reed says that John Peterson's son Daniel owned and occupied the Peterson mansion (Old Couples' Home) and farm. Daniel was 26 in 1809 when his father left for Liverpool. Reed also says that the property consisted of two hundred acres.^{44 45}

In July 1798, the Congress voted to lay a direct tax of \$2 million on the United States. This first federal direct tax on real property [including slaves] was intended to raise money for an impending war with France.

⁴⁰ From deeds researched by Joe Minott in the Lincoln County Courthouse.

⁴¹ Baker, vol. 1, p. 162.

⁴² Owen, p. 93.

⁴³ Reed, p. 299-- says 1798.

⁴⁴ Reed, p. 312.

⁴⁵ Reed, p. 312.

The Massachusetts [and Maine] Direct Tax, 1798, form shows that on October 1, 1798, John Peterson, Esq. owned in Brunswick, a house, out house, and two acres valued at \$1,100. The house was then occupied by a David Honeyson. Another form showed that Peterson also owned half a sawmill and half of a grist mill, both valued for taxes at \$300. One might assume that Peterson was in the process of moving to Bath, building a new home there, and renting out the one at Howard's Point and otherwise reducing his New Meadows holdings. Alternately, he may have employed Honeyson as agent or caretaker of his Brunswick properties. There are confusing reports about the degree to which he kept his properties at Howard's Point in Brunswick after he moved to Bath and who managed them. He is not recorded as having built any vessels in Brunswick after 1796.

1798 was a busy year for father and son John and Levi Peterson, who together built a mill at Whiskeag, the first mill built in that location. ⁴⁶.

By January 1800, the whole population of Bath was just 1,225. John and Levi Peterson were among those listed as voters in the Town of Bath. ⁴⁷

In 1803, a bridge was built across the neck of the pool (the dock) where the King's logs had been stored awaiting shipment to England. This permitted the extension shortly after of Washington Street to Day's Ferry. ^{48 49} Prior to this, access was only via Harward St.—and the river.

Vessels built, owned, and/or commanded by Capt. John Peterson

New Meadows shipyard in Brunswick ⁵⁰

- **1784** Schooner *Nancy*, 61 tons, 62' long, 18' beam; 6' 8 depth. Builder and owner: John Peterson; master: Levi Peterson.
- **1784** Schooner, *Ranger*, 66 tons, 66' long, 21' 4 beam, 7' 7 depth. Owner John Peterson; home port: Massachusetts.
- **1786** Schooner *Sally*, 53 tons, 57' long, 17' 2 beam, 6' 3 depth. Builder and owner John Peterson; master E. Johnstone.
- **1791** Sloop *Lively*, 31 tons, 53' long, 15' 4 beam, 4' 5 depth. Builder, owner, and master: John Peterson.

⁴⁶ Lemont p. 10.

⁴⁷ Lemont, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Lemont, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Reed, p. 262.

⁵⁰ Baker, pp. 902-903.

- **1792** Ship *Nancy*, 286 tons, (?). Builder and owner: John Peterson; master: Levi Peterson.
- **1794** Ship *May Flower*, 168 tons. Builder Levi Peterson(?); owner and master: John Peterson. Lemont says built in 1796 by Levi Peterson.
The *Massachusetts Mercury* (Boston newspaper) of June 9, 1795, carried this advertisement:
For Sale: The fast-sailing ship *May Flower*, burthen 170 tons; completely rigged, with suitable appurtenances, all in prime order. For further particulars, inquire of the Master on board, lying south-side Hancock's Wharf, or of John Peterson, Esq. at Mrs. Tant's, near Liberty-Square.
- **1796** Ship *Polly*, 166 tons, 75' long, 22' 7 1/2 beam, 11' 3/4 depth. Builder and owner: John Peterson; master: James Peterson. (Lemont says 1797)
- **1796** Schooner *Sally*, 135 tons (?). Builder and owner: John Peterson; master: J.S. Cushman.

Shipyard at King's Dock in Bath ⁵¹

- **1798** Sloop *Katharine*, 74 tons. Builder: Charles Clapp, owner: John Peterson, master: Thomas Donham.
- **1801** Brig *White Oak*, 144 tons. Builder: John Peterson; owner: Charles Clapp; master: Samuel Reed.
- **1802** Brig *John*, 159 tons, 76' long, 23'8 3/4 beam, 10' 3 1/2 depth. Builder ?, owner: John Peterson, master: Richard A Davis. Port: Newburyport.
- **1804** Ship *Fair Lady*, built, 305 tons, 95' 9 1/2 long, 27' beam, and 13' 6 depth. Builder and owner: John Peterson; Master, George Peterson.
- **1806** Ship *Sabattes*, 226 tons, 81' 8 long, 25' beam, 12' 6 depth. Builder and owner: John Peterson; master: J.M. Pollard.

John Peterson in Liverpool, England, and Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1809-1823

In command of one of his ships, the *Fair Lady*, and in company with a second, both loaded with his own cargoes, John Peterson left Bath in 1809 for Liverpool, England, where the cargoes and vessels were sold. It is not recorded whether his wife Sarah, age 64, or any of his children accompanied him. The master of the *Fair Lady* is recorded by Baker as George Peterson, a name that has not appeared before—possibly a grandson.

John is not listed in Bath in the 1810 Census. At some point he settled in Portsmouth, Rhode Island (on Aquidneck Island). The 1820 Census finds him there, where he died at

⁵¹ Baker, p. 817-818, p. 658.

the advanced age of 80 on June 24 or 25, 1823. He is buried in Place-Boyd Lot (cemetery), West Main Road, Rt. #114, Portsmouth, RI.^{52 53}

Several newspapers, including the *Maine Gazette* on July 18, 1823, and the *Boston Recorder* on Saturday, July 19, 1823, reported his death as having occurred in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

His wife Sarah was listed with him in Rhode Island in the 1820 Census. She would have been 78, if still living when he died in 1823.

Captain Levi Peterson

Levi Peterson (Born November 7, 1769 [one family tree says 1768]), in Duxbury, Mass.; died June 23, 1825, Bath, Maine, age 56, of severe case of dropsy [edema]). He was Capt. John Peterson's second son. He was a shipmaster and shipbuilder and was known as a man of noble bearing and a Hercules in size and strength. But he was (by 1894) "nearly forgotten in the city where he once passed in and out and filled the measure of his friends' and children's hopes." (see fn. 56.)

Many have commented on Levi's "Herculean" size. Reed said that "Mr. Peterson weighed four hundred pounds." Lemont, typically exaggerating, said he weighed nearly 500 lbs.⁵⁴ To put these comments in perspective, the official weight of American wrestler Hulk Hogan at 6'7" was 302 pounds. The heaviest Sumo wrestler ever recorded, Towanoyama, weighed in at 445 pounds. We'd be safer assuming that Levi was more like the Hulk.

Intentions to marry were published on November 10, 1796, for Captain Levi Peterson of Bath and Mary "Polly" Reed of Topsham.⁵⁵ Polly was the daughter of Mary (Thorne) and Col. John Reed, of Topsham, who was a brave officer in the American army under General Gates, fought at Bemis Heights and at Saratoga, and was present at the surrender of Burgoyne.

The house where they lived that had been owned by Capt. Simeon Turner is now known as the Peterson House or the House at King's Dock at 1463 Washington St.⁵⁶ The 1800, 1810, and 1820 U.S. Censuses show Levi as resident in Bath.

⁵² *R.I. Vital Records*: Capt. John Peterson, age 80 years, formerly of Bath, Me., at Portsmouth, RI: June 24, 1823.

⁵³ Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries, 1647-2000. page 227151 [?], AmericanAncestors.org online. John Peterson, Esq. death: 6/25/1823.

⁵⁴ Lemont, p. 90.

⁵⁵ Topsham, ME: *Vital Records, 1717-1892*. Vol. 2, p. 197.

⁵⁶ Owen, p. 93.

Their children were Daniel Peterson (in the 1850 Census, age 42, farmer) and an unnamed daughter, who would later become Mrs. S.H. Jenks.^{57 58} It is also reported that John Patten's second wife was a daughter of Levi Peterson.

There must have been yet another daughter who married Dwelly Turner as shown in a marriage announcement on June 26, 1821 in the *Portland Maine Gazette*: "Col. Dwelly Turner to Miss Mary R. daughter of Capt. Levi Peterson." Dwelly was a grandson of Capt. Simeon Turner.⁵⁹

In 1815, Messrs. Levi and John Peterson of Bath, were passengers on the Brig *Golden Age*, of Plymouth to Boston, which out eight days from Charleston—arrived Tuesday, July 4, 1815—with a cargo of cotton and rice.⁶⁰ This John Peterson could have been Levi's older brother or perhaps a nephew, to this point unseen in our record. Their appearance as passengers suggests Levi may have delivered a ship to a buyer in Charleston, and they were on their way home.

Vessels built, owned, or commanded by Levi Peterson⁶¹

- **1796** Ship *Recovery*, 207 tons. Builder and owner: Charles Clapp; master: Levi Peterson. Bath.
- **1796** Ship *May Flower*, 170 tons. (see under John Paterson previously)
- **1799** Brig *Androscoggin*, 133 tons, 75'10 long, 22'7 beam, 9' depth. Builder: Isaac Perkins; owner: William King; master: Levi Peterson. Built in Topsham. Home port: Boston.
- **1805** Ship *Native*, 318 tons, length 97'; Beam 27' 5 1/2; depth 13 8 1/4. Builder, owner, and master: Levi Peterson. Built in Bath. Port Boston.
- **1806** Ship *Thomyris*. 240 tons, 88' long, 25' beam, 12'6 depth. Builder Nathan Springer, owner and master: Levi Peterson. Built in Bath. Port Bath.
- **1810** Ship *North Star*, 293 tons, 90' long, 27' 6 beam, 13'9 depth. Builder: Joseph Foster; owner: Levi Peterson; master: Charles Carter. Built in Bath. Port Bath. Maine Maritime Museum has the half model of the *North Star*.
- **1813** Brig *George Little*. 184 tons, 82'2 long, 26'10 beam, 9'10 depth. Builder: Asa Nash; owner: Jerome Losing; master: Levi Peterson. Built in Bath. Port Bath.

⁵⁷ Reed, p. 312.

⁵⁸ William Jenks Family Papers, 1646-1943 (masshist.org). at: <http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/view/fap070>. Samuel Haynes Jenks papers, 1802-1813, Ms. N-1493. Samuel Jenks (1766-1834). William Jenks (1778-1866), Rev. papers, NEHGS mss 926. (1798-1909).

⁵⁹ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, June 27, 1821.

⁶⁰ *Repertory*, Thursday, July 6, 1815, Boston.

⁶¹ Baker, p. 815, 818, 820, 965; Lemont, p. 55, 57.

Levi continued to build ships until 1817, and then at age 48, went to sea in command of some of his own vessels. ⁶²

Vessels built, owned, commanded by other Petersons

Nehemiah Peterson (born 29 July, 1736, Duxbury; died 1811) was the nephew of Johnathan Peterson (1706-1765). His son was John Peterson's cousin, Nehemiah Peterson (born 1765, Duxbury; died 1843, in Brunswick; married Lydia Larrabee, Oct. 4, 1792). Cousin Nehemiah had accompanied John to Brunswick in 1783, when he was 18.⁶³ ⁶⁴ The 1798 Direct Tax assessment shows him in Brunswick.

- **1796** Brig *Hannibal*. 125 tons, 74' long, 23'2 beam, 8'6 depth. Built in Brunswick. Builder: Dunlap & Stanwood, owner: John Dunlap, master: Nehemiah Peterson, age 31. ⁶⁵

In early 1800, there was an incident involving the *Hannibal* following the taking of the Brunswick-built brig *Hope* by a French privateer between Tobago and Grenada. The surviving crew eventually made their way to Saint Thomas to await an American convoy from St. Kitts. This convoy included the *Hannibal*, which was commanded by Captain Nehemiah Peterson (age 35). Those returning home to Brunswick on the *Hannibal* included Captain Tappan and John Dunlap. The rest of the crew returned on the *Iris*. ⁶⁶

- **1801** Brig *Nancy*. 136 tons, 74'5 1/2 long, 22'11 1/2 beam, 9' 3 1/2 depth. Builder and owner: Jerome Loring; master: Nehemiah Peterson. Built in Bath. Port Bath. ⁶⁷
- **1805** Brig *Mary & Rachel*. 130 tons, 73'4 long, 22' 7 1/2 beam, 9'1 1/2 depth. Builder Joshua Raynes, owner: Jerome Loring, master: Nehemiah Peterson. Built in Bath, port: Bath. ⁶⁸
- **1796** Ship *Polly*, 166 tons, 75' long, 22' 7 1/2 beam, 11' 3/4 depth. Builder and owner: John Peterson; master: James Peterson. (Lemont says 1797)

⁶² Baker, p. 162.

⁶³ . Nehemiah Peterson, AmericanAncestors.org.

⁶⁴ Lovetere, p. 114.

⁶⁵ Baker p. 903

⁶⁶ . *New York Evening Post* Death Notices, 1801-1890, vol. 6, p. 82. (listed as Levi Patterson, age 55.)

⁶⁷ Baker p. 816.

⁶⁸ Baker p. 818.

- **1801** Schooner *Topsham Beauty*, 108 tons, 68'1 long, 19' 10 1/2 beam, 9' 1 1/4 depth. Builder: not listed, owner and master: Charles Peterson (son of John Peterson, b. Aug. 20, 1776.), built in Topsham. ^{69 70}
- **1804** Ship *Fair Lady*, built, 305 tons, 95' 9 1/2 long, 27' beam, and 13' 6 depth. Builder and owner: John Peterson; master, George Peterson (grandson?).^{71 72}

⁶⁹ Baker, p. 965.

⁷⁰ Lemont, p. 56; calls it just *Topsham*.

⁷¹ Baker p. 817.

⁷² Baker, p. 658.

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Types of sailing vessels from **Richard Henry Dana,**
The Seaman's Manual [12th ed., p. xx-xxi]



#23 (p.11)



Ship



Bark



Full-rigged Brig



Hermaphrodite Brig



Top-sail Schooner



Fore & aft Schooner



Sloop

PLATE IV.

EXPLANATIONS.

- SHIP.**—A ship is square-rigged throughout; that is, she has tops, and carries square sails on all three of her masts.
- BARK.**—A bark is square-rigged at her fore and main masts, and differs from a ship in having no top, and carrying only fore-and-aft sails at her mizzenmast.
- BRIG.**—A full-rigged brig is square-rigged at both her masts.
- HERMAPHRODITE BRIG.**—An hermaphrodite brig is square-rigged at her foremast; but has no top, and only fore-and-aft sails at her main mast.
- TOPSAIL SCHOONER.**—A topsail schooner has no tops at her foremast, and is fore-and-aft rigged at her mainmast. She differs from an hermaphrodite brig in that she is not properly square-rigged at her foremast, having no top, and carrying a fore-and-aft foresail instead of a square foresail and a spencer.
- FORE-AND-AFT SCHOONER.**—A fore-and-aft schooner is fore-and-aft rigged throughout, differing from a topsail schooner in that the latter carries small square sails aloft at the fore.
- SLOOP.**—A sloop has one mast, fore-and-aft rigged.
- HERMAPHRODITE BRIGS** sometimes carry small square sails aloft at the main; in which case they are called **BRIGANTINES**, and differ from a **FULL-RIGGED BRIG** in that they have no top at the mainmast, and carry a fore-and-aft mainsail instead of a square mainsail and trysail. Some **TOPSAIL SCHOONERS** carry small square sails aloft at the main as well as the fore; being in other respects fore-and-aft rigged. They are then called **MAIN TOPSAIL SCHOONERS**.

Miscellaneous Notes

Tonnage of a merchant sailing vessel is volume or capacity, not the weight of the vessel or of the displaced water. Net tonnage is the volume only of certain spaces. Gross tonnage is the total volume of enclosed spaces; net tonnage has spaces for crew accommodations, engines, fuel, and provisions deducted. "Older" tonnage was computed to measure tons of 95 cubic feet; in 1865 "new" tons were 100 cubic feet. It is not important to distinguish for your purposes, anyway; many sources do not say whether they are using gross or net, and the Peterson vessels are all going to be old tons. But the important thing is that one says "the brig measured 247 tons" not "weighed 247 tons." Before 1865, a ton was equal to 95 cubic feet, and you will sometimes see the tonnage expressed that way, as in, she was a brig of 148 37/95 gross tons. [Notes provided by Nathan R. Lipfert, former curator at the Maine Maritime Museum. Author of *Two Centuries of Maine Shipbuilding, A Visual History*. Camden, Maine: Down East Books and [Bath, Maine] the Maine Maritime Museum, 2021.]

Peterson Canal: Owen describes the course of the canal in detail.

This canal extended north from the head of New Meadows till it cleared the hill over which the road runs through Lover's Retreat, then turned east until it bent north again to enter the head of the ancient Little Whigby, or Little Whiskeag. It was easily dug, and was used to some extent; but the great difference in the time of high tide at the two ends of the canal made the route impractical for the purpose intended without a lock or locks. It is still there, though for a part of its course nearly filled up; yet passable at times for canoes. Driving from Lover's Retreat north one crosses a bridge over the canal just after emerging from the woods and continuing east past the site lately occupied by the North Bath School, crosses the canal again just at the foot of the hill. There are remains of a very old bridge in the valley west of Lovers' [sic] Retreat, where the canal cut the road of 1718 as it wound around the head of New Meadows; and the eastern bridge on the old road from the country club to East Brunswick also spans the canal. (Owen, pp. 132-133.)

Alternate shorter version of Mayflower connection:

Early histories of Bath and Brunswick reported that John Peterson (1743-1823), the primary focus of this article, had pilgrim or *Mayflower* connections—"a descendant of old Pilgrim stock." (fn 1.) But none elaborated on those connections. Recent genealogies, however, reveal that John Peterson's great-great grandfather was George Soule, who sailed on the *Mayflower* as a servant to the family of Edward Winslow. George Soule's daughter married an early John Peterson. And here starts the connection.