



No. 15

## THE ROGER WILLIAMS FAMILY ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATED 1906

Dear Members of the Roger Williams Family Association:

I greet you in my first bulletin as your new President.

Since the last bulletin we regret the passing of our beloved Chaplain, Mr. Frank O. Bishop, a grand old man, and a descendant of Roger Williams of whom our forcfather would have been proud.

Another item to be mentioned is the faithful old oak tree planted by our Association on April 27, 1904 on the exact location of Roger Williams' first Rhode Island home. The iron paling surrounding the tree, had eaten into the bark and would have soon killed the tree had it not been removed. This was taken care of by our previous President, Mr. Arthur R. Potter, jointly with the East Providence Town Council, but the bronze tablet was not replaced. We are pleased to report that now, through Mr. Potter's efforts, the tablet has been taken to a foundry and repolished and has now been replaced in a position which will not injure the tree. Few people know about this tablet by the oak tree near which is the same spring of cold water which Roger Williams used and which has been set aside by the Town as a Park on the former old Indian trail between the Ten Mile and Seekonk Rivers, which is now the busy Roger Williams Avenue.

We also have good news regarding the Roger Williams genealogy. Mrs. Anthony and Mrs. Weeden are now negotiating with the printers and as soon as definite information is available, word will be sent you. We have waited long for this. It will help many to establish lines of descent from Roger Williams and we know it will be greatly appreciated.

The next three meetings will be held at the Rhode Island Historical Society, 52 Power Street, the first Thursday of the month at 2:00 P. M. as follows:

- March 3 — (Speaker) Miss Ruth Boss
- April 7 — (Speaker) Mrs. Winthrop H. Saunders
- May 5 — (Speaker) Prof. Arthur E. Watson

HELEN M. STEERE, *President*

## SKETCH OF ROGER WILLIAMS' CAREER

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Roger Williams, the Apostle of Liberty, born in Cow Lane, London, about 1603. The discovery of the correspondence between Roger Williams and Mrs. Anne Sadlor, daughter of Sir Edward Coke, the celebrated lawyer, throws light upon his early history. It appears that this distinguished jurist was a patron of Roger Williams. Mrs. Sadlor wrote on the back of one of them (which had proclaimed some radical doctrine against the authority of the church and the divine right of kings) that her "father took such a liking to him that he put him to Sutton Hospital and he was the second that was placed there", i.e. probably under his patronage. The "Sutton Hospital" was an Educational Institution now called the "Charter House". The records of this institution show that "Roger was elected a scholar June 25, 1621". It is probable he received his further education at Cambridge University, the Alma Mater of Lord Coke himself. Tradition states he studied the law for a profession under Lord Coke, but history shows that he was engaged in the profession of the ministry.

There were other Roger Williams besides the famous one; there were two others of the identical name in New England at the same time, one of whom came over before him, settling in Dorchester. Our Roger came from Bristol December 1, 1630 in the ship "Lion" and reached Boston February 9, 1631 with his wife, Mary. In that spring he was invited to settle in a church in Boston by "their unanimous choice", but he declined in a letter to Rev. John Cotton of Plymouth but he did not "have to officiate to an unseparated people". He was soon invited to the church at Salem, which in some respects was a rival of Boston, to supply the place of Higginson, decd. but the authorities at Boston piled up objections to his reception at this office as he had refused to join the congregation in Boston because they would not make a public declaration of their repentance for having communed with the churches of England while they lived there, and besides had declared his opinion that the magistrate might not punish the breach of the Sabbath not any other offense, as it was a breach of the first table.

In Salem he was associated with pastor Skelton as Teacher of the congregation but such pressure was brought to bear by the Boston authorities that Williams went to the Colony of Plymouth, always more liberal and magnanimous than the Massachusetts Government, where

he was assistant of Pastor Ralph Smith. There he remained for two years, much beloved by the Church and people and also by the Indians with whom he cultivated the most pleasant relations which afterwards led to most important and friendly alliances. Returning to Salem where the people wished him as a successor to Skelton, then failing in health, he was ordained (1634) pastor after Skelton's decease. Here he could not fail to preach his conscientious views about church and state affairs about which he was so scrupulous and he naturally came into conflict with the Puritan authorities by reason of his peculiar or his advanced views on various points, and after they had pursued certain arbitrary measures against him and the people of Salem on his account for the space of two years, without destroying the affection of his people for him, they issued a decree of banishment against him. Permission was accorded him to remain till the next spring which was afterwards withdrawn by the Council and it was resolved that he should immediately depart for England in a ship ready to sail. However, before the boat sent for him, he escaped, leaving his wife and two small children, and — "was sorely tossed for one fourteen weeks, in a bitter winter season, not knowing what bad or bread did mean". Excommunicated by his church at Salem for refusing to bring his children to baptism, etc., banished by the civilized state in the severe winter of 1635-36, he sought refuge among his savage friends, receiving a grant from Ousamequin of what is now "Love Mills" on the eastern bank of the Seekonk River, where he built a house. Governor Winslow probably moved by some desire not to get into conflict with the Massachusetts authorities, advised him that he was within the limits of Plymouth Colony, and that he must move to the other side of the river.

Above facts from Arnold, Savage, Bartlett, and others.

To be continued in next bulletin.

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He doeth well who doeth good  
To those of his own brotherhood;  
He doeth better who doth bless  
The stranger in his wretchedness;  
Yet best, oh! best of all doth he  
Who helps a fallen enemy.

## OFFICERS

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