

Clement Orr of Orr's Island, Maine

Little Sebascodegan Island was a heavily timbered Island south of neighboring Great Sebascodegan Island and north of NewCapenewagon Island which together were west of Merriconeag Neck and all belonging to the town of North Yarmouth, York County, Massachusetts Bay Colony. An area first settled in 1636.

The region of North Yarmouth was abandoned twice before a successful final settlement in 1713. North Yarmouth originally encompassed the present Town of North Yarmouth and the future towns of Harpswell, Freeport, Pownal, Cumberland, and Yarmouth. Harpswell was the first to be sectioned from North Yarmouth, first as a separate district with its own church parish and in 1758 as a full town on its own.

Timber was the initial draw to Merriconeag Neck and work crews cut trees destined to become barrel staves, ship spars, cordwood and charcoal. In December of 1742, the Orr brothers, Joseph and Clement of Pemaquid, turners by trade, bought of Henry Gibbs, of Boston, a tract of land at the northerly end of Merriconeag Neck containing one-hundred and twenty two acres. The next day they received from the same party another tract of land of sixty-nine acres near the former [property] as well as the southeast prong of Merriconeag Neck, containing by estimation, two-hundred acres. It must have been at this point that they became aware of the fine standing trees on Little Sebascodegan.

After the end of Gov. Dummer's War, many towns and villages saw a resurgence of settlement. One of those areas was North Yarmouth which had established a Committee for the Resettlement. The committee consisted of five members, three of whom were William Dudley, William Tailor and Elisha Cooke Jr. After several years of successful work resettling residents in the town, the "Committee" felt they could reward their efforts by dividing some of the Islands in Casco Bay amongst themselves. Mr. Dudley opted for New Capenewaggon or Bailey Island. Messers Cooke and Tailor split Little Sebascodegan Island between them.

On March 20, 1748, Joseph Orr purchased the what "appears" to be all of the island, from the heirs of William Tailor. [an interesting side note is that Will Black III son of Bailey Island Will Black signs a petition in 1748 and indicated he is "on" Little Sebascodegan Island, however, he does not own any property there.]

According to the Orr Genealogy by C.N. Sinnett, Joseph in 1760 then deeded all of his land on the island to his brother Clement as a life estate, and to Clement's heirs after him. In the case of the death of Clement's heirs, the estate would revert back to the heirs of Joseph. The deed was dated 16 October 1760 (less than one month before Joseph was married). There are however, deeds after that date in which Joseph Orr sells property on the island. Both are dated 1761 and 1762 and are to David Wheeler and William Black.

Joseph Orr was the sole owner of Little Sebascodegan Island when it was purchased. His brother Clement did not own any of the land until 1760, when Joseph deeded the entire island to him. However, a deed dated February 1762 states Joseph sold land at Beal's Cove to William Black. Therefore he must have retained either some property or some right to sell.

It also appears that the title to the island was a bit confused even in its origins. One of William Tailor's heirs was the wife of Rev. Mather Byles, of Boston. She (Rebecca) was not included in signing off and placed a claim and on 22 July 1760, Joseph set off one tenth of the island for her in return for a quit claim deed to the remainder. This area of the island was known as "Byles" after that time.

Another deed in 1785, is to Joseph Orr from Benjamin Jaques the heir and brother of Richard Jaques. (Richard had bought 100 acres in 1743 which would have been five years prior to Orr purchasing from North Yarmouth. This would have likely been an "Indian Deed" although one has not been recorded.) In this deed Joseph buys Jaques 100 acres of Little Sebascodegan Island for 10 shillings. Cumberland County book 15/121.(the specific piece is not recorded. The deed only describes it as 100 acres of land.)

Joseph's brother Clement Orr received " 100 acres land for two farms". I do not have the date of this transaction but In 1750 Clement built a log house on this land. The location the log house is said by family members to have been just north the present Orr homestead, on the same site as a much newer home built in the 1950's by Robert and Mary Bangs.(close to the present Orr's Island fire Station.)

The "present" Clement Orr House was built circa 1820 and the land remained in the Orr family for many generations thereafter. The land progressed from Clement to his son Clement Jr., then to Deacon William Orr and to his children Alfred, Eliza, and Henry and after them, to their brother Charles and eventually to his widow Eunice. Eunice died in 1930.

Questions and Confusion

According to CN Sinnett in his Sinnett Genealogy, Clement and Deborah (Ward) Orr had eight children between 1754 and 1772. However, my research says Deborah died in 1764 so how does she have Richard in 1772? Richard Orr's cemetery stone at Bailey Island is broken directly through the date of death which appears to be 1851. His age at death is clearly 79 years. This would result in a year of birth of 1772. If this is correct then he was born after his mother Deborah died in 1764. His father Clement does not appear to have remarried so Deborah appears to be the only wife that might have had Richard. Some online genealogies have a birth year of 1762 but this is not supported by any citations. I have chosen to amend Deborah's death date in my database to 1774 which would support the dates of her last three children but I have NO supporting sources for this. I have not been able to locate a burial place for either Clement or Deborah. The most likely burial locations I can think of are First Parish burial ground in Brunswick od Old Harpswell Burial ground at Harpswell Center.

Richard Orr resided on Bailey Island and is thought to have lived in the house at the top the hill overlooking Mackerel Cove, now belonging to Helen "Nanny" Murray. Richard Orr also donated land for the first school on Bailey Island located along Sea Bank in front of the Woodbine Cottage. Several questions arise when computing his birth and parentage.