



# Falmouth's Western Frontier

*The Story of Mast Road and its Families*

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The Falmouth Historical Society

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Falmouth Heritage Museum

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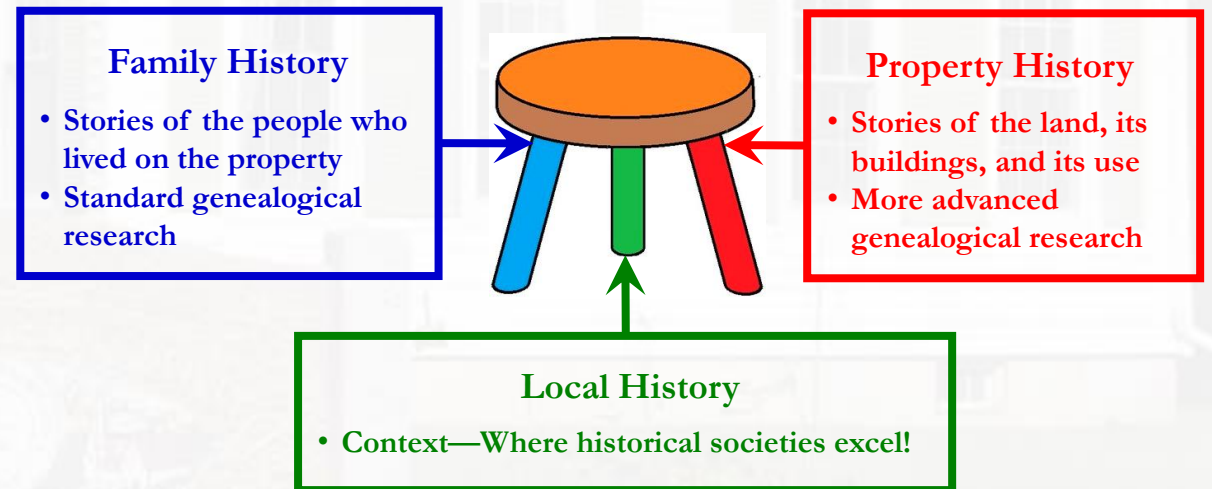
# Historical Research

We received pair of routine requests about sites on Mast Road

- Average five queries each month
- Employ our standard methodology: the three-legged stool

Property history—reconstruct the narrative for a home

- Trace the deeds
- Build light genealogies for the families who lived there
- Add local history as the backdrop







# Began with Two Maps

Four families who defined the story of this road

- Huston
- Purinton [Purington, Purrington]
- Lord
- Pride

Three early settlers whose families spanned three centuries here

Two families bound by marriage and faith

Their stories are the story of our town



Maps: Library of Congress, Digital  
Maine Repository

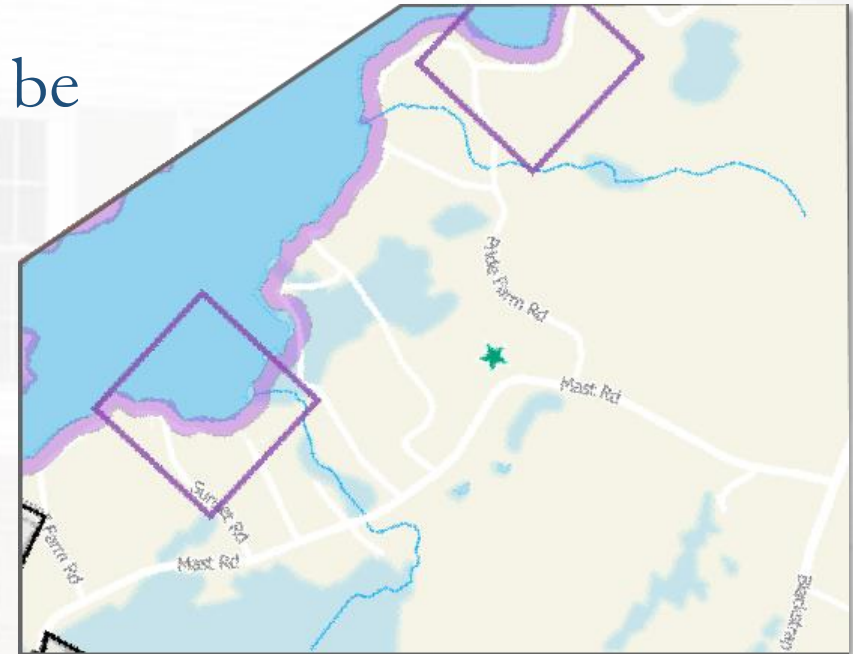


# Before the Settlers Arrived

Falmouth lies within the lands and waters where the independent band of Wabanaki we know as the Aucocisco farmed, fished, hunted, and thrived before the arrival of English settlers.

Village and planting grounds are believed to be on the Presumpscot River

Archeological research provides evidence of indigenous habitation in the vicinity of Highland Lake.



Map: Town of Falmouth





# When Was Mast Road Settled?

Not before **1725!**

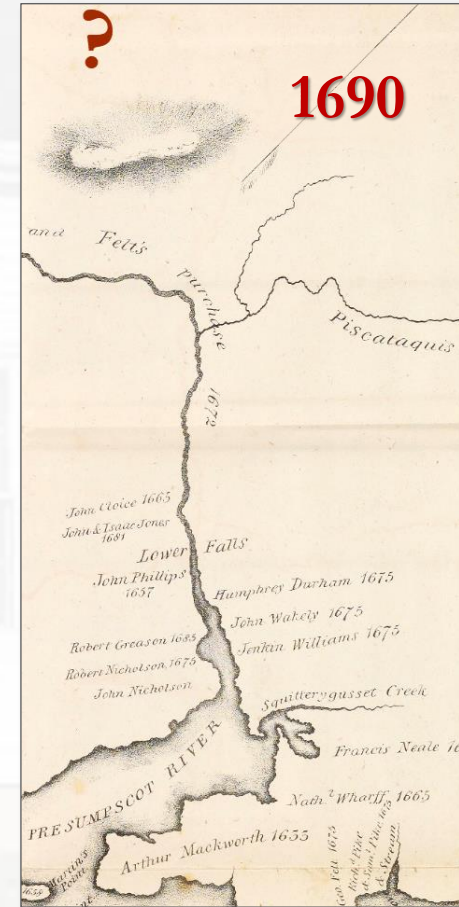
## Chronology

- 1632 First English settlers arrive, built homes by the water
- 1658 “Old Casco” annexed by Massachusetts, chartered as Falmouth
- 1675-1725 King Philips War, King Williams War, Queen Anne’s War, Dummer’s War

**Settlers Flee  
for their Lives**

Western Falmouth was the frontier

- Wilderness and the front line in wars with France



Map: Osber Map Library





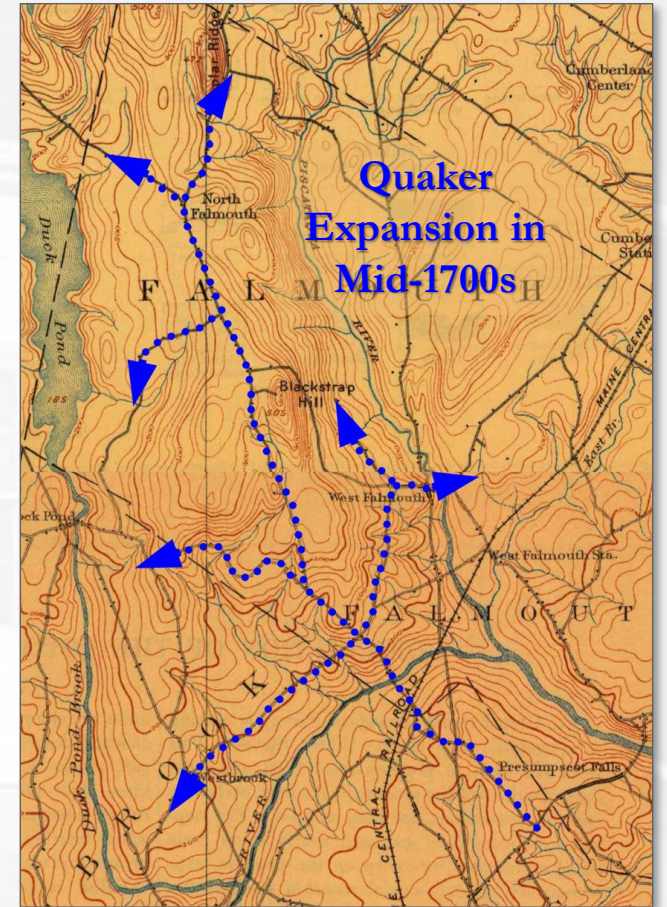
# The Quaker Expansion

## Province of Massachusetts Bay

- Included Maine
- Puritan theocracy with no daylight between church and state
- Best place for non-Puritans to be was as far from Boston as possible

## After 1725

- Quakers migrated from New Hampshire and Southern Maine to Colonial Falmouth
- Settled along “Quaker Lane” (Old Washington Avenue)
- Expanded north along Blackstrap Road around 1750



Map: USGS





# When Was Mast Road Settled?

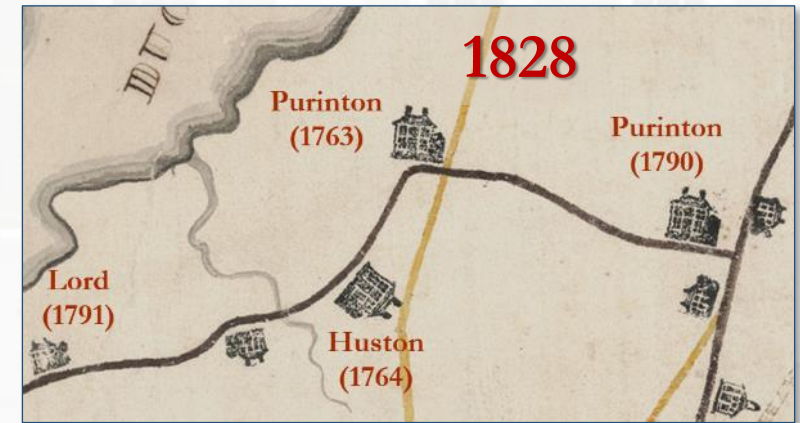
Certainly by **1763**, and possibly by **1750**

- Oldest map showing Blackstrap is 1794
- Oldest map showing Mast Road is 1804
- Likely pre-1750 logging roads

Purinton home is the oldest still standing

William Huston built earlier

- Forester for the Royal Mast Agent
- Purchased land by 1750
- Log cabin burned twice before he built current home





# Mast Trade

## Why did Massachusetts seize Maine?

- Natural resources, of course
- Mostly, it was all about wood
  - Domestic needs
  - Exports
  - Most critical, wood for warships

## Botany determined naval strength

- Maine and New Hampshire had splendid white pine for masts, bowsprits, and spars

Blackstrap was a lucrative area for mast trees



3<sup>rd</sup> Rate Ship of the Line—74 Guns

	Diameter (inches)	Length (yards)
Mainmast	36	36
Bowsprit	34	22
Foremast	31	33

*Image: Royal Museums Greenwich*





# Timber

The principal industry in Colonial Falmouth

- Fishery was an important export but secondary
- Agriculture was for subsistence and fell short

Royal Mast Agent moved to Falmouth in 1727

- King's Broad Arrow edict issued in 1729
- Falmouth overtook Piscataqua after 1762
- Exports for Royal Navy screeched to a halt in 1775

Brutish, exploitive business

- Fat cats prospered
- Small fry suffered



Exports for Royal Navy	Year 1772
Masts	382
Bowsprits	60
Yards	451
Spars	476

Image: Wikipedia



# Consequences

Widespread resentment of Broad Arrow edict

- Fueled support for the Revolution
- Led directly to Mowatt's attack on Falmouth

Resentment of exploitive timber industry

- Drove decision by Gorham and Brunswick militia not to defend Falmouth against Mowatt's attack

Loss of American masts impaired Royal Navy

- Allowed French Navy to support Revolution



*Battle of the Virginia Capes (1781)*

*Image: Wikipedia*

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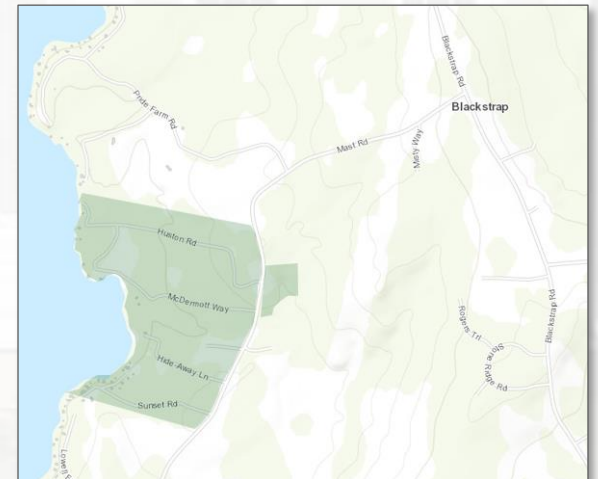
# William Huston Jr (1705-1786)

Family was Scots-Irish; Presbyterians fleeing religious persecution

Home built about 1764 by William, the son of William the immigrant.

During the 1870 census, the household consisted of Stephen (age 57), his wife, three children, and an Irish woman as a domestic. The farm had 73 acres in tillage, 10 in woodland, and 30 unimproved. The farm was valued at \$5,000 plus \$125 in equipment, and \$400 in livestock (one horse, three milk cows, two oxen, one other cow, two pigs). The farm produced wool, hay, corn, barley, peas, beans, potatoes, butter, and milk.

In 1926, the farm (then 200 acres) was sold out of the family after 177 years and six generations.



Map: Town of Falmouth



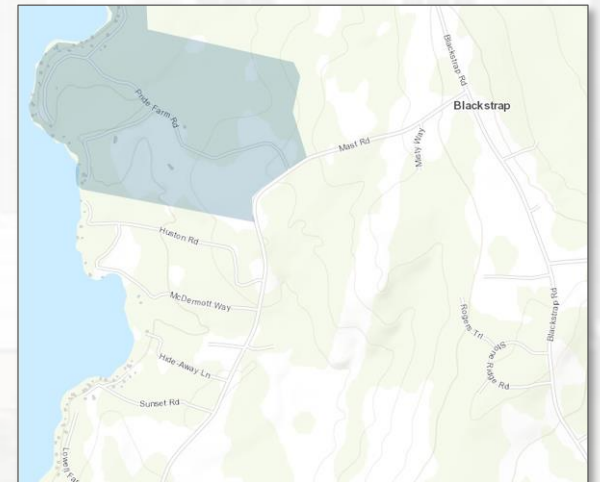
# Elisha Purinton (1729-1816)

## Quaker and blacksmith from Hampton Falls, New Hampshire.

Elisha's father, a skilled clockmaker, taught his son the trade but Elisha opted instead to become a blacksmith. He was very prominent in the Quaker community of Falmouth.

Home built about 1763 by Elisha. The farm grew to 300 acres. In 1791, Elisha conveyed 85-acre lots to each of his two sons. Elisha may have removed to Windham by 1820.

His grandson, Francis (1808-1870), was living at the Falmouth homestead in 1857. During the 1860 census, the household consisted of Francis (age 53), his wife, four children, and his mother. The farm had 100 acres in tillage and 100 unimproved. The farm was valued at \$5,000 plus \$150 in equipment and \$500 in livestock (one horse, seven milk cows, two oxen, four other cows, twelve sheep, two pigs). The farm produced wool, hay, corn, oats, peas, beans, potatoes, barley, butter and cheese. In 1863, Francis sold the 200-acre estate.



Map: Town of Falmouth





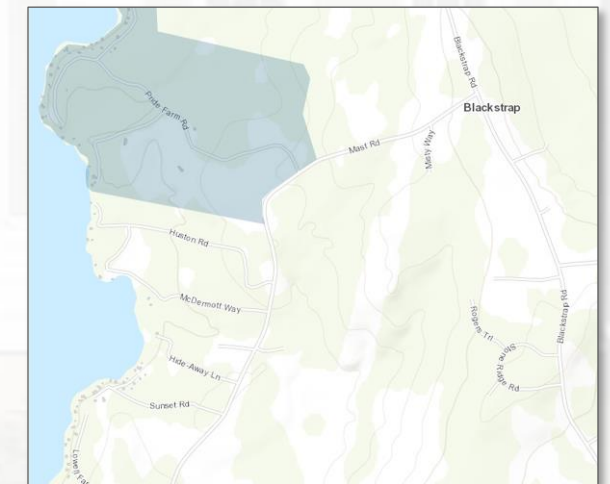
# Pride Farm

The former Purinton farm took on the name of the Pride family who owned it for nearly a century.

The family of Alexander and Mary Pride purchased the farm in 1870.

During the 1880 census, the household consisted of Alexander, his wife, and five children. The farm had 80 acres in tillage and 120 in woodland. The farm was valued at \$4,000 plus \$125 in equipment and \$400 in livestock (one horse, six milk cows, two oxen, 14 sheep, 32 pigs, and 36 chickens). The farm produced hay, corn, pulse, potatoes, apples, and wood.

In 1966, the 200-acre farm was sold by grandchildren of Alexander and Mary Pride.



Map, image: Town of Falmouth



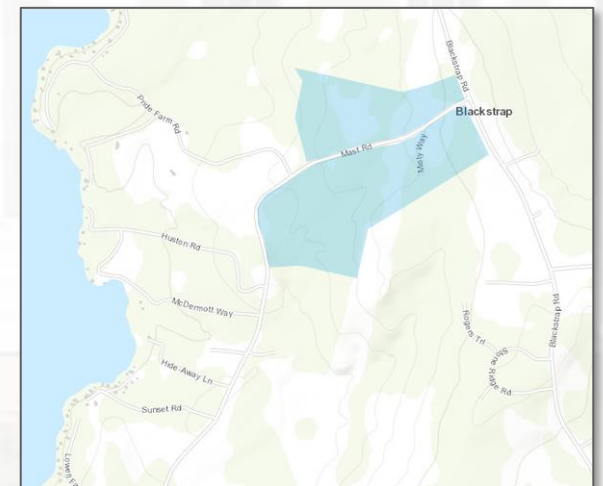
# Abraham Purington (1763-1730)

Abraham, son of Elisha Purinton, was a farmer.

Home was built about 1790 by Abraham. In 1791, Elisha conveyed an 85-acre lot to his son Abraham but may have been a different lot.

Abraham's son, George Hussey Purinton (1801-1888) was living on the farm by 1857. During the 1860 census, the household consisted of George (age 58), his wife, and two sons. The farm had 30 acres in tillage and 60 unimproved. The farm was valued at \$3,000 plus \$75 in equipment and \$450 in livestock (one horse, four milk cows, two oxen, two other cows, eleven sheep, two pigs). The farm produced wool, hay, wheat, corn, peas, beans, potatoes, and butter.

In 1895, the farm was purchased by Charles G. Purrington (1864-1955), a very distant cousin (4C2R). Together, the two parcels on both sides of Mast Road comprised 125 acres. The farm was sold off piecemeal with Charles retaining the right to dwell in the house until his death.



Map: Town of Falmouth





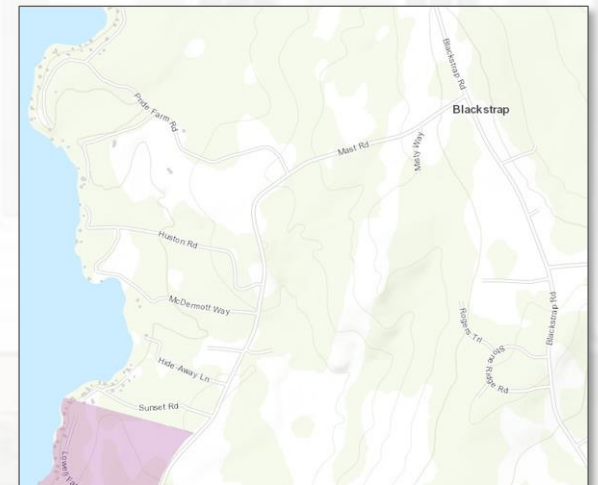
# John Lord (1772-1856)

John Lord was a farmer.

Home was built about 1791 by John Lord who acquired the land from his father, Nathan Lord. The family came from Berwick and may have had Quaker connections.

During the 1850 census, the household consisted of John (age 58), his wife, daughter, and two others. In the 1860 census, the house consists of John's widow, Abigail, their daughter, and John Pride as a farm laborer. The farm had 60 acres in tillage and 40 unimproved. The farm was valued at \$2,000 plus \$50 in equipment and \$200 in livestock (four milk cows, two oxen, one other cow, six sheep, one pig). The farm produced wool, hay, corn, peas, beans, potatoes, barley, and butter.

In 1966, Roscoe Lowell, believed to be the 2<sup>nd</sup>-great grandson of John Lord, sold the 100-acre estate.



Map: Town of Falmouth



# Camps

Turn of the last century saw seasonal camps popping up along the shore of Highland Lake

- Today there are about 100 in Falmouth
  - Near four times the number there in 1911

Initially the camps along Mast Road sat on land belonging to the three families

- As the landholders sold off their land, the camps became privately held
- Today there are community and road associations

Good topic for a future research project



*Camp on Highland Lake in Falmouth  
(built ca. 1900)*

*Image: Town of Falmouth*





# Banishing “Duck Pond”

Highland Lake was originally known as “Duck Pond”

Alvin Dyer and Sadie Woodbury owned the general store and post office at Duck Pond Corner in Westbrook. Sadie was described as a strong-willed person. She reputedly convinced the Postal Department to rename their station to “Highland Lake” despite the existence of a Highland Lake in nearby Bridgton. The change took effect October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1900.

Without fanfare, the name of the pond changed to Highland Lake and Falmouth’s Duck Pond Road became Mast Road shortly thereafter. Little Duck Pond and Westbrook’s Duck Pond Road retained their names.

Those who believed “Duck Pond” lacked class applauded the change. Many others considered the change to be an abomination and unsuccessfully pushed for a return to the original name for decades thereafter.



*A.D. Woodbury Store & Post Office  
(ca. 1890)*

*Image: Westbrook Historical Society*

Falmouth Heritage Museum



# Mast Road

## How did Mast Road get its name?

All we have is legend.

Harvesting of timber—and especially mast trees—took place around Blackstrap Hill well before settlement. Historical accounts tell us that foresters hacked logging roads through the wilderness.

Mast Road may have been a logging road. A forester who worked for the King's Mast Agent lived there. Some point to the wide turn by Pride Farm.

There is a long history of mills at Duck Pond Village in Westbrook

Mast trees may have been transported by road (what became the County Road to Windham) or water or both.



*Duck Pond/Mill Brook in Westbrook  
Runs from Highland Lake to the Presumpscot River*





# Summary

Timber

Farming

Recreation

Residential

Evolution of western Falmouth is distinct

- Settlement began later
- Harvesting of timber continued through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Farming was the mainstay from 1750 to 1950
  - In Falmouth, everyone was a farmer
- Unlike the Foreside, seasonal communities are still strong
- Lower density housing (camps excepted)

**Four families + 200 years + 700 acres on a two-mile-long road**

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