

## A Narrative of the Fessenden Family.

I have prepared a paper upon a family by the name of Fessenden: - who have been residents of the town of Menotomy, West Cambridge and Arlington. Some of them are residing here now

I find the study of genealogy, like a journey troelling day and night. If we meet objectionable wayfarers, they may be on our line, and therefore claim our recognition. The Tribe, which I have taken up are not conspicuous for good or bad - just plain going people who, with exceptions, seem generally to have taken the Golden Rule for their guide.

The Fessendens were first - known in West Phalia Germany, as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The name being spelled - Weisenden - signifying the Wise hen - on account of political reasons they were exiled and removed to the county of Kent England. Their names can now be found on the Church Records in Canterbury while dwelling there they intermarried with the Huguenots and some of them emigrated to America.

History says - John Fessenden and his wife Jane, immigrated from the county of Kent England, and settled in Cambridge Mass in 1636 - Being Glovers in the old country, they took us the same business in the new. The forests must have been rich in game at that time and they could easily procure a supply of material for this use. They acquired considerable property, and became land owners in Charlestown and Cambridge. John Fessenden was admitted a Freeman in 1641 and he and his wife became members  
the name is  
of the Church as early as 1658 - on the church records ^ Fezington otherwise written Fishington on an old heap I found that  
19a.



John Fessenden owned Pew No 12 in the new Meeting house in Cambridge built in 1656.

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Having no children, they sent to England for an heir.

Nicholas and Hannah Fessenden – Brother and Sister and nephew and niece of John came over. The tradition that: the Fessenden came from the county of Kent Eng. is supported by an item from Chief Justice Secoale's Diary

Jan. 18. 1689. Arrived at Aunt Fessenden - "her son John, and Daus., Mary, Elizabeth, and Jane" it also proves that the Sewalls and Fessendens were related in the Mother country. Nicholas Fessenden, nephew of John the immigrant married Margaret Cheney they resided in Cambridge which then included Menotomy and Lexington Their family of fourteen children became the Ancestral Tree of all the Fessenden of New England.

The numerous branches spreading far and wide, bore good fruit and otherwise – we may credit them with a desire for education: for a goodly number graduated from Harvard College and filled important positions Nicholas Fifth was a noted schoolmaster in Cambridge Samuel Fessenden son of William was an eminent lawyer in Portland Maine. – is known as Gen Fessenden; who was the father of William Pitt Fessenden the secretary of the United States Treasury – Thomas Green Fessenden poet and editor of the New England Farmer was the son of Rev. Thomas Fessenden of New Hampshire – at the present time we have heard of Reginald Fessenden a native of Canada who is prominently engaged in Wireless Telegraphy and many others in the educational, business, and social ranks of society To come nearer home, and trace the line to which the writer belongs I find that Thomas the seventh child on Nicholas married for his first wife Abigail Pulter of Lexington (he had three wives)

their son Thomas married Hannah Prentice of Cambridge.

Their son Nathaniel married Lydia Bemis she was killed by chance shot of a gun, while



holding her infant in her arms, and the child fell to the floor.

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The child bore the name of Samuel but owing to the melancholy circumstances of its mother's death its name was changed to Ichabod – meaning its “glory has departed”.

The following affecting lines composed by a relative and written on scraps of paper, have been in our family for more than 130 years; and some of the verses are past finding out – the papers are now owned by Mr. FF Russell.

On the death of Lydia Bemis Fessenden  
a few thoughts composed on the sudden and awful  
death of Mrs. Fessenden by Mr. Fessenden of Cambridge.

1

I pray all people lend an ear  
to these few lines which you may hear  
a stranger thing you never new  
although it is most certain true. – two lines lost

2

In Cambridge lived a loving pear  
a true wife and husband dear  
for when in love they did engage  
she was but eleven years of age  
yet constant ever was and true  
these I affirm for well I knew

3

A true contraction there was made  
twix the gentleman and the maid  
and when to age they did a near  
they married well as we do hear – verses 6. 7.8. lost

4

But cruel death had beguiled  
the left s husband and a dear child

19c.



and everyone that her knew  
for to lament her over threw.

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an election day we well do know  
she to her father's house did go  
for to respect her parents dear

That she away from home must go.  
To meet this awful fatal blow  
she had been there scarce half a day  
before that she was snatched away.

This harmless creature, there did set  
embracing of her infant sweet  
when death did send this fatal ball  
which proved her sad and dismal fall.

Oh! How distressing was to see  
her sent into eternity  
without one moment for to know  
when then that she was bound to go.

Twas enough to make one's heart ache  
to see this awful turn of fate  
and in a moment forced to die  
and see her in her blood to lie.  
Her pretty babe was in her arms  
not knowing or fearing any harm  
and leaning on its mother's breast  
when she snatched away by death.

Oh! How affecting it must be  
into all those who did it see  
two lines lost two verses gone

The tender parents of the dead  
refused to be comforted



and all the people every where  
in flood of tears they did appear.

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And in the years, when she did die  
was seventeen hundred and seventy  
she was not nineteen years of age  
when she did leave this earthly stage.

And now to you, her husband dear  
be pleased with these few lines you hear  
OH! now refrain your flowing tears  
your wife has gone beyond your care

We trust that she, in heaven is lodg'd  
with Christ the eternal son of God  
in due time I hope you will be  
with her to all eternity.

In due time the widower Nathaniel was consoled  
and married Elizabeth Webb of Malden – had other  
children – one of whom was Charles P. Fessenden – he was  
great grandfather of the late Frank A Fessenden of Arlington  
Ichabod Fessenden grew to manhood in spite of the  
strenuous childhood which he had to endure. He used  
to tell his children that oftentimes he would have to wear  
rags, in the place of shoes, in the coldest winter days – we may  
supposed that those were the days that “tried men soul.”

Ichabod married Rebecca Monroe – daughter of Captain  
Edmund Monroe and Rebecca Harrington who was sister  
of Jonathan Harrington the last survivor of the battle of Lexington.  
Edmund Monroe was a military man at an early age  
- was enrolled in a company of Minute Men and shared  
the dangers of the day on the Nineteenth of April 1775.  
He afterward, distinguished himself in the French



and Indian Wars – In January 1777 he received his commission as Captain afterward repaired to the Jerseys and served under Gen. Washington – on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1778 he was slain on the field of Freehold, New Jersey – commonly called the Battle of Monmouth.

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After the capture of Burgoyne Captain Monroe was presented with a pair of candlesticks – part of Burgoyne's tent equipment They are now owned by Dr. George R. Fessenden of Ashfield Captain Monroe's sword (now in the family) is owned by Edward S. Fessenden. As I have digressed somewhat from the narrative I will not return of the mention of Ichabod and Rebecca

We find him on a farm in East Lexington His calling was that of a miller as early as 1815 he followed the stream which trickles along the easterly side of this town and moved to West Cambridge – taken part of a large house, now standing with improvements on the corner of Grove Street and further down the lane the mill estate which then belong to John Tufts –to depart a little from the story we learn that the two families of Fessenden and Tufts occupied the large house at the same time One summer evening they were sitting on the stairs in the front hall or entry (in the dark I suppose) one of the Fessenden boys “up and kissed” one of the Tufts girls – but the boy made a mistake and kissed her mother possibly he rectified his mistake, for in after years, those young people were wedded later on Mr. Fessenden bought the Cooke estate – being a house and Mill privilege He built a Grist Mill and added to his holding extensive lands on the other side the road and what was for a time “Stone Crusher Lane” is now Fessenden Road. He cultivated his land in the old fashion way – the soil yielding a supply for the unpampered taste of the family and the simple ways of living made strong men and women.



From the Grist Mill men found employment in carrying meal to other towns and cities It is said that while going through Cambridge the jolly meal-men would contrive to rub their mealy coats against the black coats of the Harvard Professors.

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This locality which is now the "Hobbs Mill Estate" became the Fessenden home for many years - here a family of 8 children was reared

Edmund Monroe  
Philip Bemis  
Nehemiah Monroe  
Ichabod  
Sophronia Rebecca  
Rebecca Harrington  
Mary Herrin  
James Monroe

Mostly good scriptural names with added family names - Mr. and Mrs. Fessenden were both members of Dr. Fiskes' church and their children were christened by their faithful pastor - what ever may have been their shortcomings in after life they had received good parental care This home, which was never the abode of wealth opened its hospitable doors to several orphaned children; the grandmother wife of Captain Monroe was kindly cared for She was called Greatmarm in stead of Grandma this noble women refused a pension saying that her husband gave his life for his country's sake and she desired no reward I will here relate an early incident of her life she was first - married to one Mr. Dunster nephew on Henry Dunster the first president of Harvard College their child lived only a short time and her husband died the second year of their marriage - probably leaving her with a scanty portion of worldly goods- but she inherited a



silver porringer marked D which she said belonged to the President Henry Dunster. The little porringer remained in the family for many years and became worn and dented with age. It is now the property of Harvard College.

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To return to the family and its numerous cases "old Grannie Bemis" must not be overlooked. She wasn't a very lovable person but she was on our line, and had to be maintained. Mr. Fessenden was faithful to them all for "the poor we have with us always." She died in 1830. Beloved and respected. When this good man passed away, the family must have felt that their "glory had departed." Mrs. Fessenden died in 1848 after a long interval full of changes, incident to every family the home was broken up, and the estate passed in to other hands.

The house was taken down in 1887.

When Aunt Rebecca finally "crossed the sill" she said that she had never been cold, nor hungry in that Dear Old House.

For the next generation – Edmund died in early life and was buried in Lexington – the second son Philip Bemis father of the writer now claims our attention. According to his own account he was born in Menotomy in 1797 – it is remembered that in his boyhood, he manifested a great love of Nature – of flowers and birds. At one time probably suggested by the birds, he attempted to fly with the aid of springs taken from an old chaise. He mounted a tree, and flew – but unlike the birds, he alighted heavily on a pile of stones much to his discomfort – later on, he with others spent many hours, to discover the perpetual motion which I believe is yet to be discovered. Like his father he was a miller – he outlived the old "Grist Mill" and turned his attention to the grinding of spices and drugs. He married Rebecca Cutter Tufts in 1820. That reminds me, that she was the

19h.



black eyed girl on the stairs, that "got left" – away back in the middle of our story – they moved around some, but lived most of their married lives in Lexington and West Cambridge – while in this town Mr. Fessenden held the office of Selectman with Mansis W. Marsh and Lenard Greene – served on the school board with James Russell Esq. They had eight children three of whom died in infancy - Mr. Fessenden March 4<sup>th</sup> 1859. Leaving four sons and daughters - Mrs. Fessenden died in Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> 1887

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To continue the line – the eldest son N,M. Fessenden , married Mary Elizabeth Fiske of Lexington They resided for a few years in Boston, and moved to West Cambridge in 1848. He took a lively interest in town affairs, and served to successive years in the House of Representatives. While there, he strenuously apposed the bill, where by his town lost a valuable part of its territory to form the town of Belmont He died in middle age – his devoted widow survived him for many years – being as far as she could, both father and mother to their young family

The names are Philip Winslow he died in infancy.

Edward Stanley.

Lelia Crafts.

Horace Chapman.

Mary Pamela.

Evelyn Rebecca.

Nellie Monroe.

Marion Brown. All but one , can answer the  
roll call.

John Jerome the second son – married Elizabeth Esther Rand of Roxbury – He died Aug. 10<sup>th</sup> 1869. Leaving a widow George Harris – the third son married Elisa Peirce Tufts of West Cambridge He died Aug, 12<sup>th</sup> 1869 – His wife survived him for a few years. They left one daughter Fanny Cutler

Almira Tufts – married Henry Chadwick Whittemore of West Cambridge June 19<sup>th</sup> 1851. Their children were



Arthur Weston

Helen Chadwick

Grace Langdon

Henry and Edith Almira

Three of the numbers, died in childhood.

Grace and Edith are with us now.

Henry C. Whittemore died Aug 16<sup>th</sup> 1891