

The Whites, Hard Times Leading to Success

SLIDE ONE INTRO

Narrator

Welcome, we're glad you're here. Like most of us, the White family experienced their fair share of troubles, but with hard work, faith and a bit of good luck, each generation found a way to overcome the obstacles they faced. We can better understand the history of the White family in Heath by getting a picture of life in early Charlemont. To help us with that I want to introduce Anna Maxwell.

SLIDE TWO ANNA

Anna Maxwell

My name is Anna Maxwell. I first came to what would eventually be called Heath in 1775 with my family. I was 8 years old. My father Benjamin Maxwell bought the William Brown house on South Road where I lived for much of my life.

I wrote the first 'History of Heath'. Chapter 1, Period Prior to Incorporation

In order to give a description or History of Heath, it will be necessary in the first place, to give a concise sketch of the town of Charlemont.

SLIDE THREE NED'S MAP

At the upper end of Charlemont there were large plots of grass and corn fields. In the month of June 1755 three women on horseback rode up the river to pick strawberries: and returned without being molested. Next day some of the men went up to hoe their corn, they left their guns, their dinners, and coats at the upper end of the field and began to work. Captain Rice, an elderly man with one or more of his sons and a grandson with some others were busily at work. Captain Rice was holding plow, the boy rode the horse, the young man was hoeing. The Indians were on the hills watching their opportunity. They soon made their appearance, took their guns and dinners before they were discovered. The Indians fired upon the men in the field, killed one man, took the old man and the boy; the others ran to the fort which was six miles.

The Indians were in a hurry to get away, and lest the old man would not be able to travel fast, they killed him, and scalped him. The boy nine years old they took with them to Canada. After the war was over the boy was exchanged.

Narrator

Like the original inhabitants, white settlers like Moses Rice (killed in the Massacre described by Miss Maxwell and who was among the first group that settled in Charlemont) preferred the fertile, relatively level land close to the Deerfield River.

SLIDE FOUR CHARLEMENT BOUNDARIES MAP

About 10 years later a second group mainly from Lancaster, Leominster, and nearby towns, chose to settle in present Charlemont Center and the northern portions of the township. This part of the township was called Charlemont Hill.

Rice and other residents wanted the **taxing** power that a town would have, but Charlemont was unincorporated. Even though the legislature didn't make Charlemont a Town when first settled, it did allow a tax for certain things.

The legislature permitted the collection of a penny an acre tax provided it was used for finishing a Meeting House, for supporting Preaching, and for clearing roads. The location of the Meeting House reflects the political power of a settler from Lancaster named Joseph Wilder Jr. Wilder owned more land than Rice and hoped the site of the Meeting House would attract more buyers to his properties.

Wilder had an associate from Lancaster, his cousin Jonathan White who was also the husband of Wilder's sister Esther. Colonel White was a grandson of John White, who had emigrated from England to Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638. Jonathan was known as one of the best educated men in Lancaster. He and Joseph Wilder worked to encourage settlement on Charlemont Hill.

SLIDE FIVE RICE FARM

Colonel White was present at the first legal Town Meeting at the house of Moses Rice in January of 1753 and was chosen as a Town officer. In the summer of 1754 he, along with friend Benjamin Ballard, built a log cabin and planted an orchard close to where Alan and Betty Nichols now live.

SLIDE SIX WHITE HOMESTEAD

The slide shows the house that Jonathan's son Asaph would eventually build near the original cabin site in 1769. It came to be called the White Homestead. *t.*

SLIDE SEVEN JONATHAN WHITE GRAVES

Jonathan White's grave in the South Cemetery on land he donated to Heath.

Narrator

Jonathan must have known there were risks in settling on Charlemont Hill. He knew that ten years before, Moses Rice had retreated with his family to Deerfield following news of an attack on Fort Massachusetts in Williamstown, and how Rice lost his crops and livestock in Charlemont to Native Americans during his absence

SLIDE 8 MWH SLIDE 1 "The Sovereignty and Goodness of God ... A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration

More personally, Jonathan knew that on Feb. 10, 1676 his own great aunt, Mary White Rowlandson who lived in Lancaster, was present when the town came under attack by Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Nashaway-Nipmuc groups led by Monaco. 17 townspeople were killed and 24 abducted. Jonathan's Great Aunt Mary and her 3 children were among those abducted. Her 6-year-old daughter Sarah died of her wounds after a week in captivity. Mary was separated from her 2 other children.

SLIDE 9 – Mrs White's Removes map

After 11 weeks a ransom was paid and they were released safely. Mary's return is still commemorated in Princeton with a plaque at 'Redemption Rock' the site of her release.

Not only did Jonathan's great aunt experience the terror and trauma of witnessing the raid and death of her loved ones, her journey with her captors as they fled north was a hardship as well. In her account of her captivity, she describes a scene in the Sokoki uplands where she is barely able to keep up with the group and how she survived on little food.

Mary White Rowlandson (reader)

"It was so steep that I was fain to creep on my knees and to hold by the twigs and bushes to keep myself from falling backward."

"In this travel because of my wound, I was somewhat favored in my load; I carried only my knitting work and two quarts of parched meal. Being very faint I asked my mistress to give me one spoonful of the meal, but she would not give me a taste.

Narrator

Eventually Jonathan White would experience his own losses at the hands of the Native Americans. Heath historian Pearle Tanner describes what he found upon his return to Heath from the Battle of Lake George

Pearle Tanner

The Indians had raid his place, destroying everything and even cutting down his orchard, excepting one lone apple tree, which remained and bore apples for a long time afterward.

SLIDE 10 CATHERINE

Narrator

But Jonathan and his family did not give up and White homestead thrived. Catherine Moyer White, a great niece of Flora White traveled from Oklahoma to visit her Aunt Flora in Heath in the summer of 1938. She describes her visit...

Catherine Moyer White

The family home still stands in South Heath (put together by wooden pegs). I have a picture of the family home and on the back my Mother wrote, "Many of the trees around the house had been burned by Indians."

SLIDE 11 – Ned's map title

NARRATOR:

Some of the homes where the White family lived still survive today. Although Luke White's home, built in 1782, did not survive we believe it was located near the long driveway off Royer Rd. leading to the current house of Peter Charow and Lorraine Berger. **SLIDE 12** Amazingly, ASAPH White's home JAMES and BENJAMIN White's home built in ____ are still standing here in Heath.

SLIDE 13

The James White house. (now the Glen Gleason house)

SLIDE 14

The Benjamin White house. (Art and Carol)

SLIDE 15 – SLED RUN

Narrator

SLIDE 16 – MAXWELL

The Hugh Maxwell house, where Sue Draxler now lives, was among many structures designed or built by Asaph White. Asaph also built an early church in the new town of Heath which had been incorporated in 1785 with a southern boundary that included land which had been part of Charlemont.

SLIDE 17 TRAVEL 1

Travel in colonial times was not easy. Asaph grew concerned about the hardships encountered by his Heath neighbors trying to travel west or east. He dreamed of improving the road to the west up and over the mountains to North Adams. To finance such a project he thought of collecting tolls. But who would have the authority to do that? And he was concerned that the builder of such an improved road might be liable for personal injuries due to any defects in the road. The state was the only possible source of such rights and

desired immunity. Asaph and his associates obtained from the legislature the right to organize turnpike corporations to construct a road west and a road to the east and to derive revenue from tolls. These roads would eventually become the Second Massachusetts Turnpike to the west and the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike to the east.

Reader

Even with road improvements, travel was time-consuming and sometimes difficult. Taverns sprang up along the route where travelers could rest themselves and their horses and other livestock on the journey.

SLIDE 18 HALL

In 'Charlemont Massachusetts, Frontier Village and Hill Town', published in 1965, Allan Healy describes one such tavern that served the horse drawn coaches that travelled them.

Teams of 6 or 4 horses would pull coaches . Taverns along the road from Boston to North Adams could do a thriving business. Hall Tavern, which stood in the area of the current Hall Tavern Farm on route 2, had a barroom where men and boys came each night with local news and an interest in news of the outside world. The probate court held regular meetings here. There was a ball room at Hall Tavern to which people flocked from miles around although not on Saturday night because the Sabbath began that day at sundown.

SLIDE 19 TRAVEL2 –

Each day the stage coach would arrive bringing new guests and news from the outside world. The stage coach from North Adams came about nine o'clock in the morning on its way to Greenfield . On its return it would stop around 4 o'clock that afternoon for a change of horses.

The early coaches had seats for 9. The ride was rough as the 1800 pound coaches bounced along the turnpike. They were made in Albany of ash, oak, and elm with shaped basswood panels. They were painted red and ornamented with vermilions and yellows.

The original Hall Tavern was moved from its original Charlemont location and now serves as the Visitor Center in Old Deerfield.

Reader

SLIDE 20 – THOREAU

There were also private carriages. Mr. and Mrs. Thoreau came each year in their private carriage with pencils for sale that their son Henry had cleverly crafted. The author Nathaniel Hawthorne passed through and wrote of the road west, " Often it would seem a wonder how our road was to continue, the mountains rose so abruptly on either side, while looking behind it would be an equal mystery how we got hither, through the huge base of the mountain, which seemed to have reared itself erect after our passage. Between the mountains were gorges that led the imagination away into new scenes of wilderness. I have never driven through such romantic scenery, where there was such a variety of mountain shapes as this , and though it was a bright, sunny day, the mountain diversified the view with sunshine and shadow, and glory and gloom."(HERE?)

intermission

Flora White's family

Narrator

SLIDE 21 FLORA

Most of us are familiar with Flora White, born in Heath in 1860. Flora's father and mother were married in 1849 and the family lived in the White homestead that had been passed down to them over several generations. Twelve months after Joseph and Harriet were married their first child, Emma, was born. There followed Hattie, Charles, Joseph David, Mary Abby, and Flora Jane herself. (JOSEPH 88?)

Her father Joseph II was known in Heath as a well respected, handsome man of high intellect. In 1850 he was elected to represent Heath in the legislature in Boston.

In 1851 Joseph, the father, had just left Heath for Boston traveling the road his great grandfather Asaph had built to represent Heath when his father sent him a note:

SLIDE 22 – PICKLES

David White (Joseph's father)

After spending the most of the last night in digging [sic] Salt out of the tubs with a Crow Bar, Shovel & Chisel, saving about 3 or 4 bushels of Salt & the Cheese tubs full of brine, we found Pickels [sic] to fill 2 tubs, sent to Greenfield this day, & ordered to Fitchburg Depot Boston – Probably will arrive as soon as you receive this. We are all as well as when you left.

Narrator

It seems the family may have begun having financial challenges, as these pickles were meant to be sold to add to the family income. When Joseph returned to Heath, he tried continued to try to keep the family from going broke but found it difficult due to a serious illness. The illness dragged on until his death in 1861. Flora's older brother Joseph wrote about it in a short narrative "Reminiscent".

Joseph White Jr (Flora's older brother)

SLIDE 23 – FATHER

My mother had just finished pairing a pan of apples when I crawled up on her lap. My mother hugged and kissed me and explained that she had a "little baby" in her stomach (Flora).

A few months later I found a monkey wrench that had been lost. My mother took me to where my father was sick to explain what I had found. My father smiled and put his arm around me and kissed me saying "I was a good boy and that the wrench was worth \$1.00."

Narrator

SLIDE 24 – FUNERAL

Joseph the father was laid to rest on October 18, 1861 in Heath's South Cemetery.

Minister at the Heath Church Funeral for Joseph

Though industrious and strictly economical, he had not acquired the riches of this world ... Our departed friend has enriched you . . . by his godly influence, by his loving heart, and by his good name, and now that he has departed he has bequeathed you a good name, an influence that may never cease to be a power for good to you, and a treasure of prayer and grateful recollections which you would not exchange for anybody's riches.

Narrator

SLIDE 25 – SF

Life for a widow at this time was difficult at best, and Joseph left his wife Harriet with 5 children ranging in age from 18 months to 10 years. It wasn't until 2 years after his death that the probate court even named Harriett

White as the guardian of her five minor children. She moved with her children to Shelburne Falls after selling the family farm.

Despite the money from the sale, Harriett and her children still found themselves struggling to survive.

Young Joseph was “bound out” to another farm family on his eighth birthday in 1864 where he would work for his food, board and schooling

In 1872 Harriett and daughters Mary and Flora moved to Amherst where they lived in the home of Rev. Isaac Esty a widower and retired Congregational minister. Harriett likely ran the household in exchange for room and board. Fortunately for Flora she was also welcomed into the Amherst home of her godmother Laura Emerson, whom she fondly remembered from Heath. Laura, like Flora, had left Heath after the untimely death of her father Doctor Joseph Emerson. Both Laura and Flora would often return to Heath.

SLIDE 26 – FATHER

After Isaac Esty died in 1876, HATTIE?, Mary and Flora found that he had left them money to enroll in a two year teacher training program at Westfield Normal School, an educational opportunity for which they became increasingly grateful in their careers.

NARRATOR

Flora White was proud of the literary success of her ancestor Mary White Rowlandson. Among the so-called captivity narratives hers was a best seller. The horror of King Philip’s – or Metacom’s – War may have led to her becoming a pacifist in her later years. Due to acts of brutality by both sides the war was critical in creating a divide between the Native Americans and the colonists, but Flora was keenly aware that her family was not alone in the hard times they had suffered.

SLIDE 27 – UNITY

In the September 1941 issue of “Unity” magazine Flora wrote a “Reply to Mr. Jobman”;

Reader

SLIDE 28 – troubles

One cannot but wonder if the discursive Mr. Jobman (who so exalts the words American and British) has ever heard of our lynchings, of our discrimination laws, of our dishonorable dealings with American Indians, of our massacre of the Pequots, of our massacre of the Filipinos, described by Norman Angell as being the most brutal of all history.’

Difficulties come to most of us at one time or another; the White family is but one example of how past residents of Heath persevered through such hard times . And Flora, ahead of her time in so many ways, reminds us that we must try not let our own suffering blind us to the suffering of others.

Thank you for joining us tonight.

SLIDE 29