The Proprietors Map

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Digital Preservation of Historic Documents
The Falmouth Historical Society
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Falmouth’s Violent Past

Ancient Falmouth abandoned, repeatedly
Suffers terribly over four decades
1675-1678  King Philips War
1688-1697  King William’s War
1702-1713  Queen Anne’s War
Settlers flee south for safety
Buildings destroyed
Settlers begin returning in 1715
Town reestablished in 1718
Resettlement of Falmouth

Old Proprietors
- Holders of previous grants or conveyances
- Those who purchased title to land
- Old proprietors share ownership of common land

New Proprietors
- Holders of new grants from common land

Squatters
- New Proprietor wannabes “flocking to petition for lots”

Gen. Samuel Waldo
Old Proprietor

William Willis, History of Portland

The persons who revived the settlement of Falmouth, came from different parts of the country; they were actuated by no common principle, and held together by no common bond, except that of self-preservation. It was a frontier post and a few persons who were able to live in more secure places, or unless moved by an uncommon spirit of enterprise, would venture their persons and property in so exposed a situation. The first settlers were consequently poor; many of them were soldiers, “the cankers of a calm world,” whom the peace of 1718, had thrown upon society, and who found a resting-place here.
Legal Confusion & Chaos

Conflicting patents, grants & conveyances issued
- Council of Plymouth
- Plymouth agents in New England
- Province of Massachusetts Bay
  - Annexed Maine in the 1650s
  - Purchased patent from Gorges heirs

Records of Ancient Falmouth burned in 1690
Surveys lacked precision
Massachusetts wanted to hasten economic recovery

Who owns which land?
Enter the Lawyers

Dispute became heated in 1728

Old Proprietors pressed their claims in Boston
  • Told to “sort it out amongst yourselves”

Old Proprietors formed a Propriety

New Proprietors (of the town) responded in kind by establishing their own Propriety

Compromise reached in 1732

1728
May 25. Town meeting chiefly to consider the Selectmen’s accounts, and after having wrangled all day broke up in a flame; as near fighting as possible.

Rev. Smith’s Journal

1732
September 22. They finished the meeting to-day, entirely to the satisfaction of every body. The New Proprietors took in the Old ones by vote, (and others,) all signed Articles of Agreement. This was the happiest meeting Falmouth ever had. Thanks to God.

Rev. Smith’s Journal
The Proprietors

An extra-governmental corporation responsible for admission of proprietors along with grants and sales of land in Ancient Falmouth.

By 1773, the Proprietors had laid out 34,493 acres.

Records of the Proprietors

- Three bound volumes & three small paper books at the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds.
  - Deeds recorded in York and Cumberland Registries.
- Map of Falmouth Neck at Portland City Hall.
- Map of northern Falmouth at Falmouth Memorial Library—the “Rosetta Stone” for interpreting early deeds.
The Proprietors Map

Original in poor shape
• Many areas are barely legible
• Professionally conserved

Digitally imaged by Osher Map Library in 2019
• Imaging pulled out details not visible to naked eye
• Accessible online: https://oshermaps.org/browse-maps?id=93179

Falmouth Memorial Library

Graphic: Falmouthmemoriallibrary.org
Image: Oshermaps.org
The Osher Map Library and Smith Center For Cartographic Education

- Houses tens of thousands of rare and historical maps
- Second largest collection of publicly available maps in the country
- 19,000 sq ft facility on the USM campus
  - 7,500 sq ft, two-story vault
  - Gallery
  - Reference Room
  - Education Center
  - Digital Imaging Center
Digital Imaging Center

State-of-the-art imaging equipment

- Two **Phase One Camera stations**
  - 60 mega-pixel camera
  - 120mm Schneider-Kreuznach lens
  - Used to capture large and oversized maps & atlases
- **Nikon D850 stations**
  - 36-megapixel camera
  - Used to capture smaller to medium-sized maps & atlases

Follows federal and international guidelines

- Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (FADGI)
- European Metamorfoze Standards
Mr. David R. Neikirk
Digital Imaging Coordinator
B.A. History, USM 2010
Grad Cert in Digital Curation,
UMaine 2016

Exquisite skill and experience with highly sophisticated imaging systems
Digital Imaging Process

Imaging and post-production of the Proprietors Map took two days

Goal is a true image of the original map

- Fine color and spatial calibration ensured focus and color accuracy
- Visible light imaging
- Images are not altered to enhance features or details
- Image was collected in tiles and then stitched together
So What?

Maps are crucial to property history research

- Locating property from a deed with references to long-forgotten neighbors or landmarks
- Providing those details to find the right deed

The Proprietors “re-baselined” property ownership in Ancient Falmouth

- Map is the “Rosetta Stone” to interpreting deeds
- Map can provide guideposts for unpublished York deeds (recorded 1738-1760)
- Only detailed, contemporary map for the period
Finding Your Property in 1732

Tools
Proprietors Map at oshermaps.org
Town Plat at falmouthme.org
Computer
• Bigger screen is better
• Photo-editing software
Ruler with centimeter scale
Calculator
If using a deed for reference:
• Meets & bounds software

Process
Access the Town Plat
• Determine distance to known landmarks
Access the Proprietors Map
• Enter full page mode and zoom in
• Use centimeter ruler to determine scale
• Convert distances from plat to centimeters
• Use distances to landmarks to find location
• Take and save a screen shot of the map
Crop and enhance the shot to make it legible
Go back to Town Plat
• Use area tool to overlay the 1732 lot on the Town Plat

Image: Clipartbest.com

It's not that awful—Your town historical society can help!
A Big Deal for Falmouth History

If you are researching...
• Property in Falmouth
• Great Migration families in Falmouth

You are likely to hit an 18th century brick wall

The Proprietors Map may be your door to the past
• Depending upon legibility of your spot on the map and accessibility of deeds

The next presentation shows how