

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES
OF
GRADUATES
OF
HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS.

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GERSHOM HOBART.

Born 1645, died 1707, aged 62.

REV. GERSHOM HOBART, M. A., of Groton, Massachusetts, born in December, 1645,¹ was the son of the Reverend Peter Hobart, of Hingham, Massachusetts, and brother of Joshua and Jeremiah Hobart, H. U. 1650, and of his classmates, Japhet Hobart and Nehemiah Hobart.

After graduating he lived at Hingham, where he resided when he was made freeman at the May session of the General Court in 1673.

¹ "The Manuscripts from which the dates of the ordination and death of . . . Hobart . . . have been obtained, are often quoted or referred to at the present day, by the title of '*the Hobart Manuscripts*.' From the Collections of William Gibbs, . . . who copied them in part, these Manuscripts seem to be a brief Chronicle of interesting events, begun and continued for more than a century in the same volume by members of the Hobart family in three successive generations, and still preserved, it is understood, as a precious deposit, among their descendants. The series commences, apparently, with a notice by Rev. Peter Hobart, the patriarch of Hingham, of his arrival in this country from England, June 8, 1635; and is carried on by him till near the period of his death, January 20, 1678-9. Then his son, Mr. David Hobart of Hingham, takes it up, and pursues it till almost the time of his decease, Aug. 21, 1717. Here it is evident from the following extract, the manuscript volume remained a while in the hands of his widow. '*My son, Nehemiah Hobart* was ordained pastor to the

second Church of Hingham at Cohasset the 13 of *desember* 1721.' And now, if not before, her son, Rev. Mr. Hobart of Cohasset, took the volume into his keeping, inserted a memorial of his father's death, and pursued in it the design of his ancestors, till death cut short his labors at an early age, May 31, 1740. With a record of this melancholy event by a surviving brother, the notices of memorable occurrences contained in these Manuscripts appear to close. Judging from the specimens selected by Mr. Gibbs, though some of them are chiefly of private or local concern, yet very many of them belong to the civil or ecclesiastical history of those times, and are generally interesting. And the important dates, too, which these Manuscripts furnish, of some of which they are the only known source of information, and all of which (with only one or two exceptions that have been observed) are unquestionably accurate, render them a valuable document to the Chronologist." — S. Sewall, in *American Quarterly Register*, xiv. 402.

He was proposed as one of the candidates to be employed in preaching at Charlestown, after the death, 22 December, 1677, of the Reverend Thomas Shepard, H. U. 1653.

June 19, 1677, John Cotton, H. U. 1657, wrote to Increase Mather that he had employed Hobart to preach, "because he was forced from his worke," and procured a contribution for him; and "because they" looked "upon him as low," the deacons made an additional gift from the church treasury, besides what was paid him by Cotton; who represents his conduct afterwards as "disingenuous" and "malapert."

Hobart accompanied, or soon followed, the settlers who, after the destruction of Groton by the Indians in 1676, returned in the spring of 1678. June 29, 1678, the inhabitants made him liberal grants of land and privileges, if he would "accept of y^e call and come to settle among" them "to be y^e Townes Minister & the churches officer." He was ordained 26 November, 1679, as successor to Samuel Willard, H. U. 1659.

December 10, "1680 for 81," it was agreed to give "M^r Huberd seaventy pound for this year: ensuing and to pay him in corn Indian wheat Rye barley at price current as the court stat it and in other prouission as god blesse vs withall and 30 cord of wood to be proportioned by the sellect men according to euery mans proportion to be payd by the first of March."

"22 of the 10 m^o 1680," the salary was reduced to fifty pounds, one quarter of it to be paid in money.

Hobart appears not to have lived harmoniously and happily with his parishioners. They differed at first about the location of the meeting-house, and afterward about his salary.

In 1682 it was voted "that the salackt men doe mak and maintain pase and loue won with an other in the town

and ashpashaly with m. hubard in incoridging him in his work by forwarding won and other in being wiling to alow him honorabl maintainans as the law darackts in pay and thay warn the in habitans to gather till thay be agreed with him and the salack men mak no rate till the town be agreed with him."

December 14, 1685, it was agreed to "give M Hubord ffour core pound this yere and soo from yer too yer and soo not rising any hir anolally in spashia as foloweth twenty pound in money ayt pound in pork at three pens a pound and fifty too pound in corn of all sorts as it plase god to blese them too be payd at too tarms won half by the furst of March next and the other half by the tenth day of nouembr next and forty cord of wood which is too be payd yerly by the last of Jeniwary next and soo anoaly from yer too yere and not too Ris any hiyer." To this Hobart assented; but with the condition that the pork should be in the first half-year's pay, to which the town would not agree.

December 28, 1685, it was voted that Hobart had "set himself at liberty from the said town as to any engagement from him as their minister as also he has freed the town from any engagement to himself. . . by refusing and slighting what the said town offered him for his salary, at two several town-meetings [seventy-four pounds at the first, then eighty] . . . and that the town is yet ready and willing to agree with him for the future, if he see cause. . . From this vote no man dissented."

At the same meeting there was a vote to give Hobart a hundred pounds annually, ten pounds in pork at three pence a pound, etc.; but several of the principal men dissented. The hundred-pound vote was confirmed by the town 11 March, 1685-6, the second time; but Hobart's condition was not agreed to. So it seems that rather than yield as to the time of paying the pork, the

salary was increased twenty-five per cent, and the Selectmen were ordered to make the rate accordingly.

Peace, however, was not restored. July 27, 1686, there was an agreement to pay Hobart eighty pounds, in case the non-residents paid as they had done, otherwise seventy pounds, annually, one quarter of it in money; and if any one could not pay in money he might pay the one quarter in corn, or other provision at half-price; but there was a quarrel about this agreement at a town meeting 9 December, 1687, because many of the inhabitants said they had not heard of it, and it was not properly entered on the records.

Money, it seems, was scarce, and Hobart, who appears always to have been pecuniarily distressed, would not receive grain at half-price; for at a town meeting 12 August, 1689, James Parker, Jonas Prescott, John Farnsworth, and Josiah Parker agree that if those who were unable to pay the tax in money would bring in wheat at "2s. 6d. per bushel, rye 2s. corn 1s. 6d., within a week, they would receive it and pay the money."

It is probable that the dissensions became so great that Hobart left the town about this time; for proposals were made to him in 1690, and again in the latter part of 1693, to return, though in the mean time calls had been extended to others. He came back before January, 1694.

When the Indians attacked Groton, 27 July, 1694, and killed more than twenty persons and carried away more than a dozen, "Mr. Gershom Hobart, the Minister of the Place, with part of his Family, was Remarkably preserved from falling into their Hands, when they made themselves the Masters of his House; though they Took Two of his Children, whereof the one was Killed, and the other some time after happily Rescued out of his Captivity." A captive, who escaped from the Indians and arrived at Saco 25 April, 1695, reported: "Mr. Hobarts

Son Gershom is well at a new Fort a days Journey above Nerigawag [Norridgewock], Masters name is Nassacombêwit, a good Master, and Mistress. Master is chief Captain, now Bombazeen is absent."

After Hobart's return to Groton, several votes respecting the salary were passed, from which it seems probable that he preached till about the beginning of 1705, and no longer.

A petition to the General Court from Groton, 3 January, 1704 [1704-5], speaks of the "grat damidg & discoridgment and spashaly this last yere hauing lost so many parsons som killed some captiuated and som ramoued and allso much corn & cattell and horses & hay wharby wee are gratly Impouerrished and brought vary low." The petition represents Hobart as having "been for aboue a yere uncapable of desspaning the ordinances of God," and that the neighboring ministers advised them to "hyare another minister and to saport mr hobard and to make our adras to your honors . . . for we are so few & so por that we canot pay two ministers nathar are we willing to liue without any." Twenty pounds were thereupon granted to the "Town of Grotton to Encourage & Assist them in Procurig another Minister to help them under the present Disability of their Pastour M^r Hubbard," and ten pounds more to those that "have been the greatest sufferers, in the late outrages made upon them by the Enemy."

Hobart probably resided in Groton till his death, 19 December, 1707.

By his wife Sarah, who died 14 April, 1712, he had several children. His successor at Groton was Dudley Bradstreet, H. U. 1698.

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Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections, xxi. 256; xxxviii. 237, 599. C. Mather, Magnalia, vii. 86. J. Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, ii. 433, 435. S. Sewall, Manuscript Diary; and in Massachusetts Historical Society's Collections, xlv. 403. S. Sewall, in American Quarterly Register, xi. 249, 260; xiv. 402. Spirit of the Pilgrims, v. 65. E. Thayer, Family Memorial, 105.
