

Results of the Documentary Research

II. Sequence of owners/occupants

A. 1651 – 1677 Thomas¹ Stanton

Thomas¹ Stanton erected a house on the southern portion of his land at Pawcatuck not long before his death in Dec. 1677, as he left the “new house” and land to the south of his homestead farm to his son Robert² Stanton in his will written October 24, 1677.

Robert² Stanton was married about six weeks earlier (Sept. 12, 1677), suggesting the house was built for him and his bride.

B. 1677 – 1724 Robert² Stanton – inherited from father

Upon the death of his father Thomas¹ Stanton in Dec. 1677, the newly-married Robert² inherited the “new house” and surrounding land that comprised the southern portion of his father's estate on Pawcatuck Neck. He lived there with his family; six of his eight children lived to adulthood.

Robert² died in October 1724, but he appears to have been ill for several years as he actually wrote his will, leaving his house and farm to his youngest surviving son, Thomas³, in March 1722.

C. 1724 – 1751 Thomas³ Stanton – inherited the house and lands from from his father after his death in Oct. 1724.

The dendrochronology dating indicates that the timbers for the present western portion of the house (Phase II structure) were cut in 1721-22, and the house erected over the next year or two. It is possible that Thomas³ oversaw the construction of the new house; it may even have been constructed for him and his family. Thomas³ married in 1713; by 1724, when his father died, Thomas and his wife Joanna had five living children between the ages of four months and eight years. The widow of Robert² was granted a widow's dower of 1/3 of the real estate and use of the dwelling house, all household goods, moveables, stock and personal estate, during her natural life.

D. 1751-1758 Heirs of Thomas³ Stanton; Robert⁴ Stanton reassembled the Homestead Farm

Thomas³ Stanton died intestate (without a will) in 1751 (prior to September). Between 1751 and 1758 Robert⁴ Stanton executed 10 deeds with his siblings acquiring either the rights of inheritance of his siblings to the homestead farm prior to the settlement of the estate or several defined pieces of land, spending £9745 old tenor for the land. In the process, Robert⁴ Stanton and his brother Thomas⁴ Stanton exchanged quit claim deeds for sections of the farm, with Thomas⁴ receiving the western section and the “new house” standing upon the land and Robert⁴ receiving the old homestead farm with the Phase I and II structures. When these transactions were commenced in 1751, Robert⁴ Stanton was listed as being of South Kingstown in the colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations where he apparently resided (a son, Thomas⁵ Stanton was born in Stonington in 1750); by 1754 deeds listed Robert⁴ as residing in Stonington, perhaps in his enlarged and lavishly remodeled dwelling house (if it was completed by this date) or perhaps with his brother Thomas⁴ on the adjacent farm if the house was still under construction.

E. 1751 – c.1767 Robert⁴ Stanton (d. by 1777); and possession by Ezra L'Hommedieu and Thomas Fanning, c.1767 - 1772

As the dendrochronology dates for the east addition to the house (Phase III) indicate that the trees were cut in 1751/52 and the house built soon after, it is clear that it was Robert who was responsible for the demolition of the c.1670s house and the erection of the east addition. Between the purchase of the house and lands and the extensive improvements which he then made, as well as a reportedly lavish lifestyle, Robert was forced to sell several parcels of land and to borrow considerable sums of money from several individuals, most of which he failed to pay back. This ultimately led to his turning to L'Hommedieu and Fanning first for loans in 1763 and 1764, then finally for a large loan against his property – the mortgage deed of October 1764 - which he failed to pay back and ultimately resulted in his loss of the farm, with attachment and possession taken by L'Hommedieu and Fanning sometime in 1766 or 1767.

The farm was rented to Hezekiah Munro by 1768, as he was paying rent on the farm that year, and he stayed in possession of the farm until early in 1772 as revealed by entries in L'Hommedieu's account book and by a deed describing an adjacent parcel of land as butting against property in the improvement of Hezekiah Munro, late the estate of Robert Stanton (Stonington Land Records Vol. 9, pp. 241-242).

Davis and his family arrived in Stonington on April 28, 1772, apparently having already agreed to the purchase of the farm with L'Hommedieu and Fanning. The deed for the sale of the farm by L'Hommedieu and Fanning to John³ Davis of East Hampton, Long Island, was executed on June 17, 1772 as being free and clear of all encumbrances– or so everyone thought.

The documentary record clearly raises questions about whether John³ Davis's son, John⁴ Davis, actually occupied the farm as early as 1765 as reported in the published Davis genealogy and in family lore. It may be possible that he arrived a month or two earlier to prepare the farm for their arrival (the deed that mentioned that the farm was in the improvement of Hezekiah Munro was dated 24 February 1772).

The question also remains of where Robert Stanton was living between the time L'Hommedieu took possession of the farm in the late 1760s and his death in 1777. His name appears several times in John³ Davis's account book between December 1772 and September 1774 as a debtor to John Davis for leather work, shoe work, currying, and for the purchase of bushels of apples and wheat. His son, Robert⁵ Stanton Jr., appears in John³ Davis's account book in nine entries between September 1773 and January 1777 as a debtor to John Davis for leather and shoe work; Thomas⁴ Stanton, brother of Robert⁴ Stanton, appears in John³ Davis's account book numerous times between November 1774 and June 1780 as a debtor to John Davis for currying and shoe work.

F. 1772-1785 John³ Davis and family – contested ownership

John³ Davis received a warranty deed to the Stanton Farm from Thomas Fanning and Ezra L'Hommedieu on June 17, 1772. Apparently Fanning and L'Hommedieu were

under the impression that they had clear and free ownership of the farm when they performed this sale to Davis, but that was not the case. They had never obtained a quit claim deed from Robert Stanton relinquishing his right of redemption in equity of the mortgage, and so legally Robert Stanton remained the legal owner of the property. John³ Davis made many unsuccessful attempts to settle the issue of ownership with Robert Stanton, eventually writing to the Governor Jonathan Trumbull requesting his and the General Assembly's intervention to assist him in gaining clear title to the property, again without success, as Stanton refused to cooperate. In early 1777, before the death of Robert Stanton, several additional claims against the him for unpaid loans he had received from several individual resulted in the attachment of the land occupied by Davis.

After the death of Robert Stanton in 1777, Davis continued his efforts, achieving resolution only in 1784/1785 when the estate of Robert Stanton was settled by his son and administrator, Robert⁵ Stanton of Groton. Davis agreed to pay off the remaining outstanding claims of creditors to the estate of Robert⁴ Stanton in 1784 and finally obtained free and clear possession of the farm in 1785. John³ Davis wrote his will on April 5, 1784, more than a year before he obtained a free and clear deed to the property from Robert⁵ Stanton, suggesting that he had essentially reached agreement with Stanton on the terms of sale. Davis divided the farm among his children, leaving each of them undivided shares in the farm.

During the period of his residency between 1772 and 1784 John³ Davis erected a new barn on the property in 1773. His son John⁴ Davis married Abigail Baker in East Hampton in 1773 and returned with her to the farm in Stonington, where they continued to reside and raise their family of six children born between 1776 and 1793.

G. 1785 – 1798 Ownership of John³ Davis (d.1798); occupancy by John⁴ Davis and his family and several siblings.

John³ Davis, his wife Mary (Conklin) by a second marriage, and several of his children both by Mary and by his first wife Catharine (Talmadge) returned to East Hampton, Long Island in 1784, leaving behind his son John⁴ Davis and several of his siblings to live on the farm, manage its affairs, and work in the shoe trade preparing leather and making shoes. During this period John⁴ Davis sent considerable products of the farm to Long Island for his father "Daddy Davis" and family; John⁴ Davis's siblings who remained in Stonington on the farm worked off their rent to Daddy Davis for their room and board at the farm by currying leather, making shoes, working on the farm, and making cheese. Several of the siblings and their families lived in the homestead or in adjacent buildings, one of which John⁴ Davis purchased from George Sheffield in 1794, a parcel that Robert⁴ Stanton had sold to his brother Thomas in 1764. An account book documents the construction of a corn crib in 1790, purchase of materials and labor constructing a new hearth (likely the kitchen chamber fireplace and hearth) and house repairs in 1790-91, and more house repairs in 1795-1796, including laying a new kitchen floor.

H. 1798 – 1802 Heirs of John³ Davis

John³ Davis died in East Hampton, Long Island, on December 15, 1798. The will he wrote in 1784 left undivided shares in varying proportions to his sons and daughters.

I. 1802 – 1809 John⁴ Davis (purchased rights of other heirs) and was sole owner of the farm.

In 1802 John⁴ Davis bought out the undivided shares of his siblings to the farm; by 1803 his married siblings had moved away to Preston and Norwich City or back to East Hampton. John's widowed mother resided with him on the Stonington farm until his death in 1809.

J. 1809 – 1833 Ownership and division of the farm between John⁵ Davis and Daniel⁵ Davis.

John⁴ Davis died on March 31, 1809 in Stonington. He left the farm to his two sons John⁵ and Daniel⁵, undivided; his widow was given some personal estate and allowed to live in the house with wood supplied from the farm during her lifetime in lieu of exercising her 1/3 dower rights (she died in 1831); he left to his daughters and granddaughters some furniture, animals, cash, and gave to his two unmarried daughters the right to live in his "new dwelling house". This suggests that he had erected a new dwelling on a portion of his land, likely the house on the east section of the farm which was occupied by son Daniel⁵ and his family while son John⁵ and his family occupied the west half of the farm, which included the present house (the old homestead). In 1833 John⁵ sold his right to the east farm to brother Daniel⁵. Daniel⁵ died two months later.

The construction of the present rear ell and improvements in the kitchen (new oven, plastering, mantel) were carried out by John⁵ Davis during the late 1820s or early 1830s.

K. 1833-1864 John⁵ Davis (1833 clear ownership of west half)

In the quit claim deeds of 1833 John⁵ Davis gained free and clear ownership of the west half of the farm (c.240 acres) and his brother Daniel⁵ Davis gained ownership of the east half of the farm (mostly east of Greenhaven road to the river). As the only son of Daniel and his wife Mary (Robinson) had died in 1825, the property passed to the widow but eventually passed to John⁵ Davis either when she remarried (as only surviving heir) or by sale. By 1850 John⁵ Davis's son Thomas⁶ William Davis resided on the east farm with his wife and three young children, although the farm continued to be owned by his father. John⁶ Davis died in 1864 at the age of 87, leaving the homestead farm to his son John⁶ Davis. John⁶ Davis had acquired the former William Stanton Farm on which resided John D. Robinson; he left this farm to his three daughters: Clarissa Green, wife of James M. Green; Abby Robinson, widow of Thomas W. Robinson; and Mary Cole, wife of Oliver Cole.

L. 1864 – 1884 John⁶ Davis

John⁶ Davis inherited the homestead farm from his father and resided there with his wife Phebe; sons John Jeremiah⁷ Davis and Alphonso⁷ Davis; and daughter Sarah M.⁷ Davis; The East Farm, bequeathed to Thomas⁶ William Davis, brother of John⁶, in the 1861 will of John⁵ Davis, was occupied by 1850 by Thomas⁶ William Davis and his family (possibly as early as 1843 when his first child was born).

M. 1884 - 1908 John Jeremiah⁷ Davis, Alphonso⁷ Davis, and sister Sarah M.⁷ Davis

John⁶ Davis died in 1884; ownership of the farm passed to his children John Jeremiah⁷ Davis, Alphonso⁷ Davis, and Sarah M.⁷ Davis, who inherited and jointly owned the homestead farm. Eldest son John Jeremiah became head of the household after John⁶

Davis's death in 1884, or at least he was listed as head of household on the 1900 census (he was then 46 years old). John Jeremiah married in 1899, but his younger brother Alphonso married before him in 1897. Both married couples resided on the farm in the old homestead. On the 1900 census both are listed as owners. Alphonso⁷ died in 1908, two months after the death of his wife, leaving two young children (John⁸ Laurence Davis, age 10, and Marcia⁸ Louise Davis, age 8). John Jeremiah Davis and his wife Elizabeth were childless. Also in the household in 1910 was Sarah⁷ M. Davis, sister of John Jeremiah.

During the mid-1890s several improvements/alterations were made to the homestead: the addition of the new kitchen off the west end off the house; reconfiguration of the northwest corner room adjacent to the new kitchen addition; relocation of the doorway from the southwest parlor to the kitchen and transformation of the former passage between these rooms into a pantry/closet opening onto the enlarged northwest corner room.

N. 1908-1929 John Jeremiah⁷ Davis and Sarah M.⁷ Davis and John Laurence⁸ Davis and Martia⁸ Davis

The farm was jointly owned after the death of Alphonso⁷ and his wife Ida in 1908 by Alphonso's brother John Jeremiah⁷ Davis, sister Sarah M.⁷ Davis, and children John Laurence⁸ Davis and Martia⁸ Davis.

O. 1929 - 1989 John Laurence⁸ Davis, Sarah M.⁷ Davis, and Martia⁸ Davis

After the 1929 death of John Jeremiah⁷ Davis, John Laurence⁸ Davis became the head of household. In 1930 the household contained John Laurence (age 31) and his wife Sarah (age 28); their son John⁹ Whitman Davis (age 5); John Jeremiah's widow Elizabeth (age 70); aunt Sarah M. (age 74); and sister Martia L. (age 29). Land at the lower end of Osbrook Neck was sold in the 1950s.

P. 1989 - 2006 John Whitman⁹ Davis

After death of John Laurence⁸ Davis in 1989, John Whitman⁹ Davis gifted the house and a small parcel of land to the Stanton-Davis Homestead Museum, Inc. Other parcels of land were earlier gifted to a land trust and nature preserve, and to son Laurence Malcolm¹⁰ Davis, who still owns and works parts of the old homestead farm.