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Ordinary Keeper, Quaubauge, Mass., 1671-1674

John Ayres came from England to Massachusetts with his father, John, and was in Ipswich by 1640. He married first, Sarah Williams, on 5 May 1646; married second, after 1659, Susannah Symonds, daughter of Mark and Margery Symonds of Ipswich. Susannah died 8 February 1682/3 at Ipswich. John Ayres died 3 August 1675 at Brookfield, Mass.

In 1648 John Ayres was a tenant of John Norton in Ipswich. He removed to Brookfield when that settlement was commenced. In 1660 the General Court, acting on petition of several inhabitants of Ipswich, granted "sixe miles square" "in a place called Quaubog ponds", "provided they have twenty families there resident within 3 years, & they have an able minister settled there within the sayd terme." John Ayres was one of five who went to Quaubauge in the summer of 1660 to select the town site. On 2 July 1668, John Ayres and three others met to select a lot to set aside for the minister.

"September 26, 1671 Goodman Ayres of Quaubauge is licensed to keep an ordinary and sell wine & liquor for the ensuing year." The license was renewed in September of the years 1672, 1673, 1674.

In November 1672 John sold his rights at Ipswich, including those "belonging to my father-in-law Mark Symonds and used by me while I was a tenant upon Mr. John Norton's farm."

The requirements for a township were not met within the 3 year period, but, on 11 October 1673 they begged again to be allowed a township. John Ayres, Sr. heads the list of signatures. This time it was granted and the name Brookfield was given to the town. John Ayres has been called the "pushing man" of this venture.

Ayres was first Sergeant of the Brookfield Company which did not have the required complement to rate a Captain. He was given the title when he had to assume command on 2 August 1675 when the Indians attacked. In the ensuing skirmish, Capt. Ayres was killed on the 3rd of August.

John Ayres' house, located in the center of town, and site of his ordinary, was the "largest and strongest house." Here Capt. Wheeler, when he arrived with 26 men on the 4th of August, "six wounded men and fifty women and children" stayed during the siege. Even crowded in as they undoubtedly were, the presence of 62 at one time in the house suggests a sizable building.

On 1 June 1677 Susanna Ayres petitioned the court, "that what she expended on & the souldiers had of her for the country's use, was five pounds ten shillings in swyne, by Capt. Poole's order, as also seventeen shillings & seven pence Ephraim Curtis had for himself & company & horses, on the country's account, with what Major Willard had, which will appear by the account, she may be paid & satisfied for - the Court grants her request."

John Ayres' family, with the other inhabitants, returned to Ipswich following the Indian raid and for the next decade Brookfield was a deserted town.

-Caroline Kirkham (Dayton) Engle
75-38

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