

Cobbett's Pond in Windham derived its name from the Rev. Thomas Cobbet, a prominent Puritan divine of the first generation in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who was minister in Lynn, 1637-56, and in Ipswich, 1656-85. In the public records his name is sometimes found spelled Cobbett and Cobbitt as well as Cobbet, but there seems to be no question that the last named method was considered by himself as the correct one.

Concerning the life of Mr. Cobbet and his "farm" of 500 acres bordering on this pond, which the General Court of Massachusetts granted to him in 1662, the GRANITE MONTHLY of January, 1917, contained some account. Mr. Cobbet had been dead a third of a century when the first settlement was made of the region embracing his grant and the pond near which it lay-Nutfield, soon named Londonderry. Just when and how his name first began to be applied to the pond is not known, but the early Scotch-Irish settlers of Londonderry must have found the name already well established when they appeared upon the scene, otherwise we would expect them to have given it some appellation brought from their own Old Country, or at least of their own selection.

The first use of the name in public records, so far as is known to the writer, is found in the Proprietors' Records of Londonderry, under date of October 29, 1723, only four and a half years after the first planting of their settlement: "Laid out by order of the town a farm Given in the Charter to the Rev. Mr. James McGregore Containing two hundred and fifty acres of land lying and being to the northeast of Cubages pond so Called." (Early Records of Londonderry, as printed, Vol. 2, p. 84.)

In the early town records and proprietors' records of Londonderry, the name of the pond is mentioned about thirty times between 1723 and 1741, and is spelled in nine different ways. The form Cobats, first found in 1728, is used in about half of these places, and Cobbatts occurs twice. The other forms all contain *a g*, and are Cubages, Cubagess, Cubbages, Cubbagess, Cobages, Cobagess, and lastly Cabages, this found only once. These corruptions are to be explained as a sort of double possessive, meaning Cobbetts's, as one might say Hills's for Hill's or Fields's for Field's. Considering that few people in those early days knew the origin of the name or ever saw it written, and that there was hardly a standard for spelling anything, it is rather remarkable that the name was transmitted without even more variations than it sustained.

The town records of Dracut, Mass., in 1733 have the name of this pond Cobets. In the town records of Windham its first mention is in 1754 with the spelling Cobbats. The next year the spelling is Cobats. In a deed written in 1766, apparently by Lieut. Samuel Morison, one of the leading citizens of Windham, Cobbets pond is mentioned. But in a document written by the same hand four years later, on one page the name is spelled in three ways - Cobets, Cobbets, and Cobbetts. The use of the apostrophe came later.

The first published map on which the pond was named was probably the famous map of New Hampshire prepared by Dr. Philip Carrigain, by authority of the legislature, and published in 1816. But by some unfortunate calamity the name lost its final letters and appeared as Cabbo P., and this error was copied in Merrill's Bazetteer of New Hampshire, published in Exeter, the following year. But this error was matched on a

pocket map of the state published in Portsmouth between 1830 and 1840, in which the name was decapitated and given as Abbot P.

In Farmer and Moore's Gazetteer of New Hampshire, issued in 1823, the pond appears as Cabot's and this inaccuracy was repeated in Hayward's Gazetteer of New England, 1839, and in two later Gazetteers' of New Hampshire, Charlton's, 1857, and Fogg's, 1875. In the early church records of Windham occurs the form Cabbot's.

As if the name had not passed through variations enough, on the large, carefully prepared wall map of Rockingham County, published in Philadelphia in 1857 and 1859, the name for the first time acquires a wholly inexcusable *r* and becomes Corbetts. This error was retained in Hurd's Atlas of New Hampshire, 1892, and has not been entirely outgrown to the present time.

In the Poems of Robert Dinsmoor, the "Rustic Bard," printed in 1828, we have the first authoritative spelling of the name in print by one who lived on the shores of the pond, indeed on the very land granted to Mr. Cobbet, and who knew the correct orthography. In this volume it is spelled Cobbet's, which form should never have been thereafter varied from. But the second *t*, having been introduced in the name of the pond two-thirds of a century ago, has become too firmly established to be dropped now.

The first occurrence of the name in print, spelled exactly as at present, Cobbett's, is probably on page 181 of Rev. E. L. Parker's History of Londonderry, published in 1851. This spelling was followed on the map of New Hampshire - the most accurate map of the whole state ever published - which was issued in 1878 as a part of C. H. Hitchcock's Report on the Geology of New Hampshire. It was followed in Morrison's History of Windham, 1883, and in various other books and publications since.

Still another form of the name appeared on the Manchester sheet of the topographic map issued in 1905 by the United States Geological Survey - Cobbett pond. This in accordance with the rules of the United States Geographic Board, which aims to simplify names by discarding possessive forms wherever not too firmly entrenched by local usage. But recently (January 3, 1917), the Board, having received representations concerning local usage continued through nearly two hundred years, has rendered a decision restoring the final *s* (but without the apostrophe), thus sanctioning the orthography Cobbetts Pond.

Note: This article is taken from The Granite Monthly, June, 1917, and reprinted by The Weirs Times, Thursday, May 3, 2007. All copyrights reserved.