

## Genealogy of the Cuffe and Wainer Families

by R. Andrew Pierce

The Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard and of the nearby seacoast community of Dartmouth, Massachusetts (from which Westport and New Bedford both set off in 1787), have intermarried for many generations. Families concerned include the Allens, Almys, Baileys, Bordens, Coopers, Coshomons, Cuffes, Davids, Dodges, Gershoms, Jefferses, Michaels, Mingos, Neebes, Panues, Pechakers, Quabbins, Quannowins, Quanwells, Simons, and Wainers.

By the mid-1700s, many Wampanoag bloodlines were mixing with African-American ones. Wampanoag men had perished in large numbers, largely due to disease and to the whaling industry; and the population of single men (freed slaves and sailors) from Africa and the Caribbean had greatly increased in coastal New England.

The use of "patronymic" surnames (taking the given name of one's father as a surname) was widespread among Wampanoags and African-Americans from Pilgrim contact (1620) onwards. Families named "Abel", "Moses", "Cuffe", and "Gershom" in different communities, or sometimes even within the same community, were not necessarily related to each other; just as in the 1200s, men in many different English villages whose fathers were named John or William took the surname "Johnson" or "Williams(on)", etc.

Paul Slocum, later called Paul Cuffe, was born in what is now Westport in 1759, the son of Cuffe Slocum, from West Africa, and his wife Ruth (Moses), a Native American. Neither of Paul's parents were natives of Westport; Ruth, according to her granddaughter's statement, came from "Harewidg" (Harwich, on Cape Cod). By the time she moved to Westport in 1746, probably to find work, the native Potenumacut community in Harwich and Eastham had employed a schoolteacher named Moses, in 1698 (he was perhaps Ruth's grandfather), and had listed Joab Moses, Moses Moses, Joseph Moses, Israel Moses, John Moses, Lydia Moses, and David Moses, as inhabitants.

Paul's wife Alice (Abel) (Pequit) Cuffe had deep roots in Westport's Wampanoag community. According to testimony by her grandchildren, her mother was Alice Quonce, and her grandmother was Naomi Quonce. Naomi perhaps married Nehemiah Abel, a minister and schoolmaster who preached at the Elizabeth Islands as well as Dartmouth. Before marrying Paul Cuffe in 1783, Alice had married firstly in 1772 to James Pequit, whose surname is also of long standing in Dartmouth, appearing on the 1724 and 1763 lists of inhabitants.

Two of Paul Cuffe's brothers, Jonathan and John, married Vineyard Wampanoags as their first wives. Jonathan's wife Hepzibah was from the ancient Akoochuk (Occouch) family of Gay Head/Aquinnah, and John's wife Abiah was the daughter of Thomas Cooper, born in Dartmouth, whose grandmother was from the Vineyard and who moved to the Vineyard to marry Mary Harry. John Cuffe's son, Samuel Cuffe, married Harriet Michael whose Vineyard-born grandparents were Sharper Michael, a freed slave, and Lucy Harry, a Wampanoag.



Mary Slocum alias Cuffe, the second daughter of Cuffe and Ruth(Moses)Slocum, and Paul Cuffe's older sister, married Michael Wainer in Westport in 1772. According to testimony in 1798 and 1859, he was the son of Margaret Wainer, alias Quebbin, who was born at Gay Head/Aquinnah, probably about 1730, and the grandson of Dorcas, a Wampanoag who first married a Wainer, and whose second husband was perhaps Nathan(iel)Quebbin, born about 1708, who was on the 1724 Dartmouth list and who served as a soldier in the French and Indian War in 1757.

Dorcas appears on the 1763 Dartmouth list and also signed a 1781 Gay Head petition(as did her daughter Margaret Waner(sic), indicating they had settlements in both places. It appears that Michael Wainer attempted, unsuccessfully, to claim land rights at Gay Head in 1798. He was a Dartmouth/Westport resident most of his life. His first wife(married in 1770)was Lydia Pequit, perhaps a sister of James Pequit, Alice(Abel)(Pequit)Cuffe's first husband. He married Mary Slocum, alias Cuffe, in 1772.

On 2 November 1776, Michael Wainer of Dartmouth, "mustee-man, alias Michael Quaben", bought from Giles Russell, three quarters of an acre of land near Allen's Neck and Smith's Neck in Dartmouth, one of the bounds being "the northwest corner of said Michael's dwelling house." This indicates that Michael had previously settled on this land. The Dartmouth Wampanoags' land boundaries and titles are poorly chronicled after the early 1700s, in contrast to those on the Vineyard; very few Wampanoag deeds appear in the Bristol County land records after that period, and the tribal land appears to have been held in common.

The business partnership between Michael Wainer and his brother-in-law Paul Cuffe, and between their children, is well chronicle in Lamont Thomas' *Rise to Be A People* and Rosalind Wiggins' *Captain Paul Cuff's Logs and Letters, 1808-1817*. In the latter work appear several letters which indicate more Westport-Vineyard Wampanoag connections. In 1816 Cuffe exchanged letters with his "esteemed friend" Joel Rogers, a leader of the Gay Head/Aquinnah community who was half white and half native. Rogers' first wife Dorcas *may* have been a sister of Michael Wainer, though this has not been proven.

Also in 1816, Cuffe exchanged letters with his "dear friend" Mary/Molly Prince of Benson, Vermont, Michael Wainer's sister, who had previously been married to a Sterling and whose son "Matthew" lived on Gay Head. The only Matthew there at that time was a Matthew Gershom, so it is presumed that Mary married firstly to a Gershom. Cuffe's letter also mentions Mary's "sister Sary"(Sarah), who as "Sarah Wayner" had married Pero Russell, a freed slave at Dartmouth in 1795. In 1780 he, Paul Cuffe, John Cuffe and other "negroes and mulattoes" of Dartmouth petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for relief from taxation, they not having the voting rights of citizens.

The above facts are drawn from extensive research undertaken for the publication of R. Andrew Pierce and Jerome D. Segels' *Wampanoag Families of Martha's Vineyard*, released by Heritage Books in 2016.