

Where The Record Is Found (Citation)

Baird, C. W. (1871). *Chronicle of a Border Town: History of Rye, Westchester County, New York, 1660-1870, Including Harrison and the White Plains Till 1788*. United States: Anson D.F. Randolph.

Describe The Record (Notes)

I. George Kniffen, of Stratford, Conn., in 1666 bought a house and land in Rye from John Budd senior; 'the house being situated in the town formerly called Hastings.' (Probate Records Fairfield Co.) At the same time probably he acquired proprietary rights which continued in his family as long as the corporation subsisted. He was 'propownded for freeman' of the colony in 1670, his name appearing as 'George Snuffene, of Ry.' (Conn. Rec., vol. ii, p. 128.) His 'house-lot, laid out in 1678' seems to have been situated where his descendant Jonathan Sniffen now (1870) lives. He died in 1694.

A son, Joseph, and a daughter who married John Stoakman, are known. Five others of the name are presumed to be his sons: Ebenezer, Jonathan, George, Nathan and Samuel.

II. 1. Joseph (2), son of George Kniffen (1) is named as early as 1703. In 1711 he lived near 'Tom Jeffer's hill,' the present (1870) site of the Episcopal Church.

2. Jonathan (2), mentioned 1697-1721, had land in the north end of the town.

3. Ebenezer (2), first mentioned 1700, had land in the Town Field. The proprietors of Lane Will's Purchase in 1709 gave him land on Hog-pen Ridge, 'in consideration of moneys lent to the town, which belonged to his wife's portion.' He died about 1722.

5. George (2), mentioned 1705-1718, is alluded to as early as 1687, his father then calling himself senior. In 1705 Deliverance Brown, senior, sold to George Kniffen four or five acres in the Great Swamp. This locality was between Ridge Street and Regent Street, south of the road to Park's mill. There 'the Kniffens' owned land long after.

5. Nathan (2), mentioned 1701-1708, bought land on Gunn Brook Plain, or in the neighborhood of Dr. Sands' property. He was living in 1741, when he was called 'senior.' He had Nathan and Caleb.

6. Samuel (2), probably the youngest son of George Kniffen (1), was constable and collector of Rye in 1701. He married a daughter of Francis Purdy. His petition to the governor (about 1701) states that he is 'a prisoner in the common Gaol of the County, being destitute of many friends.' The inhabitants of the town of Ryde had made choice of him for constable, and afterwards the collector's place was laid upon him; 'and being a young man very ignorant of any office was flattered by the people so that the Rates which he was to collect through his simplicity are great part in arrears.' This has brought him into this destitute condition; and 'having a poor distressed wife at home big with child expecting every hour her deliverance, and no body to help her,' he implores his excellency to grant him enlargement, 'so that he may go and collect said taxes with all severity.' (N.Y. Col. MSS., vol. xxxviii, p. 215.) These taxes were those that had accumulated during the revolt of the town to Connecticut. The inhabitants evidently did not blame the collector for his lenity; and the governor must have granted his petition; for he was made one of the townsmen of Rye the next year, 1702. He died before 1707. (Ibid. vol. lii, p. 41.)

III. 1. Joseph Kniffen (3), called 'junior' in 1732, was perhaps a son of Joseph (2). He lived apparently about where Mr. T. Theall now (1870) lives, on Grace Church Street. In 1752 he sold to Josiah Purdy twenty-two acres 'beginning at the corner by the entrance of Grace church street.' Thomas and Obadiah Kniffen were perhaps his sons.

2. Ebenezer (3) is named in 1735 with Joseph (3) as if brothers. He was a man of means and influence; acquiring as proprietor and by purchase a considerable landed property. He was justice of the peace in 1755 and 1769. He lived in 'the town-plot,' on or near the site of the house opposite the Episcopal Church, now

(1870) Mr. Daniel Budd's; and owned a farm of ninety acres, bounded by Grace Church Street and the Milton Road. This farm he sold, about the year 1768, to Ezekiel Halsted, who conveyed it to Philemon Halsted soon after. Ebenezer Kniffen removed in 1769 to Courtlandt Manor.

3. Jonathan (3), son of Johnathan Kniffen (2), in 1745 owned land east of the Hog-pen Ridge Road. He died about 1758, leaving a son Jonathan.

4. George (3), perhaps a son of George Kniffen (2), in 1712-1717 bought land on Brush Ridge, and called himself 'George Kniffen of Brushie Ridge.' He afterwards lived on King Street, but by the year 1744 had removed to North Castle, where he died in or before 1750. He left two sons: George and David; and probably Israel.

5. Nathan (3), son of Nathan Kniffen (2), had land in 1741-1751 between Grace Church Street and Boston Road.

6. Caleb (3), son of Nathan Kniffen (2), was perhaps the person of this name who lived in White Plains.

7. Samuel (3), mentioned in 1718, perhaps an older son of Samuel Kniffen (2).

8. William (3), son of Samuel Kniffen (2), was born about 1702. At the Court of Sessions in Westchester, in 1716, 'Francis Purdy junior acquaints ye Court at ye Request of his father Francis Purdy senior, yt William Sneffin son of Samuel Sniffin deceased, who dying when ye said son William was but two years old, and upon his death-bed gave ye said William unto his grandfather Francis Purdy senior until he attained to ye Age of twenty-one years,' is now fourteen years old; and his friends ask to have him bound to a good trade. (Westchester Co. Records, lib. B. p. 68.)

Of this generation there were several others, probably grandsons of George (1), but whose immediate parentage I cannot ascertain. Andrew Kniffen is mentioned in 1724; Benjamin in 1727; Thomas in 1740; Nehemiah in 1741; Amos in 1744.

Thomas lived on Grace Church Street, and was perhaps a son of

Joseph (2). Amos Kniffen bought in 1752 the house where Mr. Ezraiah Wetmore now (1870) lives, with eight acres.

IV. 1. Thomas Kniffen (4), perhaps the son of Joseph (3), was the father of Thomas and Nehemiah. He is said to have lived where the entrance to Mr. Quintard's place now (1870) is.

2. Obadiah Kniffen (4) in 1732 adopted the 'ear-mark' or cattle-brand of Joseph (3). These marks were generally transmitted from father to son.

3. George Kniffen (4), 'eldest son and heir to George Kniffen, late of North Castle, deceased,' in 1750 surrendered all interest in the farm at Rye which his father had owned, and where his brother then lived. He probably settled in North Castle.

4. David Kniffen (4), brother of George (4), was living on King Street in 1752.

5. Israel Kniffen (4), probably a son of George (3), had removed to 'Philipsburgh manor' by the year 1745, when he sold land at Rye which he had acquired 'on the right of William Odell, one of the Proprietors. This right George Kniffen had bought in 1706, 1715 and 1717.

6. Jonathan (4), son of Jonathan Kniffen (3), owned a large tract of land between Regent Street or 'Sniffen's lane' as it was then called, and Purchase Avenue, or the road to Park's mill; extending southward to the Boston Road. He lived on Regent Street, in a house which formerly stood opposite Mrs. A. Sherwood's barn.

7. Samuel Kniffen (4), 'junior, of Phillips' manor,' in 1748 bought of Abraham Theall ninety and one half acres bounded northwest by Westchester Brook. A part of this land - lying near the stone bridge - remained in the possession of the Sniffen family until within a few years. Samuel's wife was Rebecca.

8. John Kniffen (4), perhaps a brother of Samuel (3), married Hannah Sawyer. According to family tradition, he lived in a house south of the stone bridge, on land now (1870) belonging to the Presbyterian church, and owned considerable land, extending

back to Beaver Swamp. This was the farm above described as bought by Samuel in 1748. John had seven sons:

John, Caleb, Isaac, Nathanel, Hachaliah, William, Elisha, and three daughters; Nancy, who married Rev. Henry Belding; Lavinia, Deborah.

9. Caleb Kniffen (4), brother of John (4), and perhaps of Samuel (4), lived in 1751 where his son Caleb lived in the early part of this century (1800s), on the road from Port Chester to the Purchase, near Mr. Peyton's present (1870) residence.

V. 1. Thomas Kniffen (5), son of Thomas (4), was about fourteen years old at the outbreak of the Revolution. His sons Samuel and Jonathan Sniffen are now (1870) living in Rye.

2. Nehemiah (5), son of Thomas (4).

3. Elisha Kniffen (5), son of John (4), born July 11, 1773, married Amy Seaman, born June 11, 1777. He removed from Rye to Saw Pit, now (1870) Port Chester, and died there March 6, 1851; his wife died Dec. 19, 1858. They had two sons, Sylvanus S., and Seaman H., and three daughters, Henrietta, Amy M.

4. Caleb Kniffen (5), son of Caleb (4), lived in the old house near Mr. Peyton's, and died about 1828.

Other sons of John (4) - John, Nathanael, Hachaliah - were married, and had children, whose descendants are living in the town or in New York. (1870).

VI. 1. Seaman H. Sniffen (6), son of Elisha (5), born April 6, 1805, married Emeline Smith, who died in 1845. They had six sons: John, Charles, Sylvanus S. (my informant - died Dec., 1870), William C., Isaac, Mitchell M.; and two daughters: Elizabeth and Henrietta.

Benjamin Kniffen, perhaps the Benjamin mentioned in 1724, died about the close of the Revolution. His will, dated 1783, names his sons:

Andrew, Roger, and Benjamin; and his daughters: Gertrude Bull, Phoebe Bull, Sarah Kniffen, Mary Wilson, Elizabeth Sherwood, and Jemima Merritt.

Andrew had three sons: Jeremiah, Roger and Andrew; and two daughters, Eliza and Gertrude.

Benjamin had three sons: Benjamin, James and Abraham.
(Probate Rec., Westchester Co.).

Roger Kniffen was living in 1783-1788 on 'Gratious' Street.

'Widow Sniffen' had her children baptized, July 22, 1792: Sarah, John and Isaac, adults; and William, Anna, Hachaliah, Deborah, Nathan and Levina, young children.