History Tour of Colonial Falmouth

You are descended from early English settlers of Colonial Falmouth. For its first century as a Massachusetts town, Falmouth encompassed an area including the



present-day cities of Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook, as well as the towns of Cape Elizabeth and Falmouth.

We urge you sign up for Maine Historical Society's walking tour of Portland on Saturday. You'll get a condensed history of Portland and see many of the city's historical buildings (including the Old Port where some of your ancestors once lived).

As you explore Portland, keep in mind that lower-lying portions of the

city are landfill. The waterfront originally ran along Fore Street. Commercial Street was added for the railroad during the mid-19th century; it sits atop the original wharfs and landfill. The area on Back Cove called "Bayside" was created

when Portland cleared the debris from the terrible destruction by the Great Fire of 1866.

Your guide may tell you how sea level rise and storm surge are returning those areas to the sea.



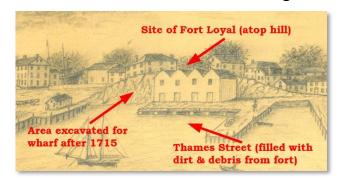


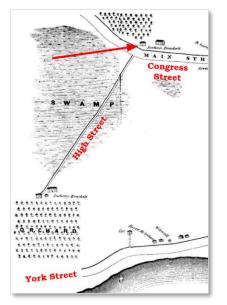
One of the sights you should see on your walking tour is <u>First</u> <u>Parish Church</u> at <u>425 Congress Street</u>. Colonial Massachusetts was a Puritan theocracy with no daylight between church and state. This church was originally Congregational (Puritan) and, until the mid-18th century, was the only church in Colonial Falmouth. Your ancestors belonged to First Parish.

The tour should also pass by the site of <u>Fort Loyal</u> at <u>3 India Street</u>, later the Grand Trunk Rail & Steamship Offices, and now Gorham Savings Bank. Most of your ancestors escaped the massacre by the French and their Native allies during <u>King William's War</u> in May 1690. Alas, Anthony the Immigrant and his wife were killed in 1691 where they had sought refuge in New Hampshire, and his son Anthony was killed in 1689 while defending his farm on Back Cove.

Here is a sketch of the fort's location in the 1840s. The fort was built atop a hill. The fort was burned by the French after the massacre. The bodies of the English

settlers were later buried there. Part of the hill was excavated to make room for a wharf. The rest of the hill (including the skeletons) was excavated and used for landfill when the railroad was built during the mid-19th century.





Congress Square Park at the intersection of High and Congress Streets. This was the location of Joshua and Esther Brackett's homestead at the time of the Revolution. Esther Cox's family lived by Robison's Wharf on York Street near the intersection with High. Joshua was a soldier who served on expeditions during the Colonial and Revolutionary Wars. After the Revolution, Joshua was living by the Presumpscot River, probably near where Riverton Trolley Park is located.

You may find it helpful to refer to William Willis' maps of <u>Falmouth to 1690</u> and <u>Falmouth Before Burning</u> during your tour on foot and driving. Before leaving Portland Peninsula (formerly known as Falmouth Neck), here are some vantage points where you can gain a better perspective of Portland and imagine how it looked two centuries ago.

<u>Portland Observatory</u> at <u>138 Congress Street</u>. Built to give early notice of arriving ships, the observatory provides a "bird's eye view" of Portland.

Fort Allen Park at 49 Eastern Promenade on Munjoy Hill. The park offers an expansive view of Casco Bay including Peaks Island (the Bracketts and the Mittons had deep ties to Peaks). The park is an excellent spot for a picnic. We recommend Italian sandwiches (a Maine staple) from <u>Amato's</u> on India Street. For modern fare, there are food trucks nearby on Cutter Street.

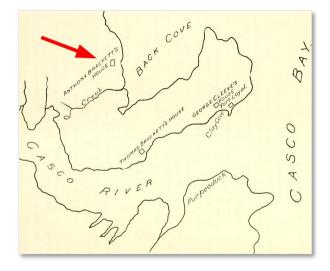
For a good view of Back Cove, there are <u>Loring Memorial Park</u> on the Eastern Prom, or <u>Fort Sumner Park</u> on North Street.

Visitors to Portland also enjoy driving by the grand homes on Bramhall Hill's Western Promenade.

And now we turn to the special points of interest off the peninsula.

Back Cove. Baxter Boulevard and a trail wrap around Back Cove. Most of the land upon which the road and trail run is fill. If you don't mind a little walking, you should be able to park at <u>Back Cove Trail Parking</u>. If pressed for time, you can

Boulevard. Just to your north is Pedro Little League Field. It's worth stepping out onto the field because that is the approximate location of Anthony and Susannah's homestead farm. Anthony and his first wife, Ann Mitton, had been taken hostage in 1676 during King Philip's War. On the same day, Thomas was killed while working in his fields and his family was also taken hostage.



Anthony and his family escaped, but Ann died the following year. Anthony was killed defending the farm in 1689 during King William's War.



The farm was destroyed the year after Anthony's death. His son, Zachariah, returned by 1719 (after Queen Anne's War) to claim his patrimony. He may have built the new farmhouse on what is now the campus of the University of Southern Maine. The farm was purchased by Henry Deering, the "merchant prince of Portland," in 1761. Pull into the parking lot on Brighton Avenue near the intersection with Bedford Street.

To your left is the "<u>Deering</u>
<u>Farmhouse</u>." Deering's mansion and barn were demolished to make room for the campus, but the farmhouse built in 1807 remains.

I-295 now divides what was once the 200-acre Deering Estate. A large portion of the estate is now Deering



Oaks, an attractive public park planned by Frederick Law Olmsted. On the same day in 1689 when Anthony Brackett was killed, a battle ensued what is now Deering Oaks. The English repelled the attackers.

The next points of special interest are on Foreside Road (Route 88) in Falmouth. The homesteads of Esther Cox's maternal grandfather (Ebenezer Davenport) and greatgrandfather (James Andrews) are on the Foreside.



The best vantage point of the waterfront is from Falmouth Town Landing at the end of <u>Town Landing Road</u>. For fun, visit <u>Town Landing Market</u> ("Fresh Native Ice Cubes") at the intersection of Foreside and Town Landing Roads.

There isn't much to see because the forest has grown back, but the Andrews farm was located on Waite's Landing Road at the intersection with Elm Drive.

That covers the locations with special ties to your family.

We also suggest visiting local lighthouses:

- 1. Bug Light at Bug Light Park in South Portland.
- 2. Spring Point Ledge Light and Fort Preble on Bunker Lane in South Portland.
- 3. Portland Head Light at Fort Williams Park in Cape Elizabeth.
- 4. **Two Lights** as viewed from the <u>Lobster Shack at Two Lights</u> in Cape Elizabeth.

These are best toured when the weather is pleasant.

Enjoy!