



# The Proprietors Map

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*Digital Preservation of Historic Documents*

The Falmouth Historical Society

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Falmouth Heritage Museum



# Falmouth's Violent Past

Ancient Falmouth abandoned, repeatedly

Suffers terribly over four decades

1675-1678 King Philips War

1688-1697 King William's War

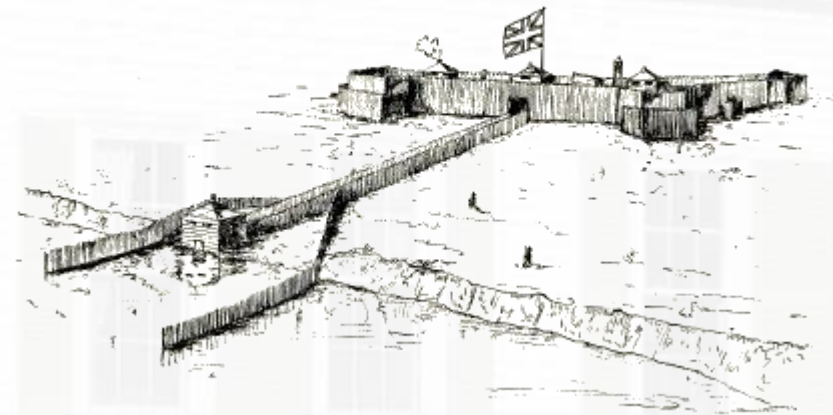
1702-1713 Queen Anne's War

Settlers flee south for safety

Buildings destroyed

Settlers begin returning in 1715

Town reestablished in 1718



*Fort New Casco on Falmouth Foreside  
(1700-1716)*

Image: Mainmemory.net

Historical photographs, unless otherwise attributed  
were obtained through the Wikimedia Commons

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# Resettlement of Falmouth

## Old Proprietors

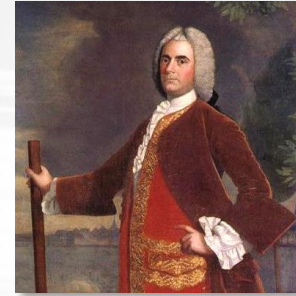
- Holders of previous grants or conveyances
- Those who purchased title to land
- Old proprietors share ownership of common land

## New Proprietors

- Holders of new grants from common land

## Squatters

- New Proprietor wannabes “flocking to petition for lots”



*Gen. Samuel Waldo  
Old Proprietor*

The persons who revived the settlement of Falmouth, came from different parts of the country ; they were actuated by no common principle, and held together by no common bond, except that of self-preservation. It was a frontier post and a few persons who were able to live in more secure places, or unless moved by an uncommon spirit of enterprise, would venture their persons and property in so exposed a situation. The first settlers were consequently poor ; many of them were soldiers, “the cankers of a calm world,” whom the peace of 1713, had thrown upon society, and who found a resting-place here.

*William Willis, History of Portland*



# Legal Confusion & Chaos

Conflicting patents, grants & conveyances issued

- Council of Plymouth
- Plymouth agents in New England
- Province of Massachusetts Bay
  - Annexed Maine in the 1650s
  - Purchased patent from Gorges heirs



*Ferdinando Gorges*

*Seal & Signature of Sir Ferdinando Gorges*

Records of Ancient Falmouth burned in 1690

Surveys lacked precision

Massachusetts wanted to hasten economic recovery

***Who owns which land?***

Image: Willis, History of Portland

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# Enter the Lawyers

Dispute became heated in 1728

Old Proprietors pressed their claims in Boston

- Told to “sort it out amongst yourselves”

Old Proprietors formed a Propriety

New Proprietors (of the town) responded in kind by establishing their own Propriety

Compromise reached in 1732

1728

*May 25. Town meeting chiefly to consider the Selectmen's accounts, and after having wrangled all day broke up in a flame ; as near fighting as possible.*

Rev. Smith's Journal

1732

*September 22. They finished the meeting to-day, entirely to the satisfaction of every body. The New Proprietors took in the Old ones by vote, (and others,) all signed Articles of Agreement. This was the happiest meeting Falmouth ever had. Thanks to God.*

Rev. Smith's Journal



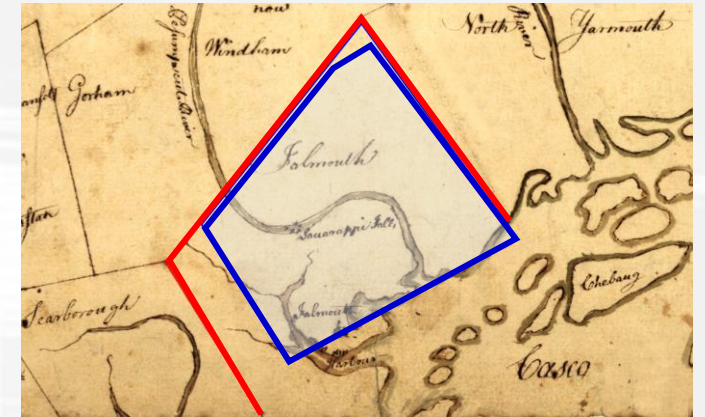
# The Proprietors

An extra-governmental corporation responsible for admission of proprietors along with grants and sales of land in Ancient Falmouth

By 1773, the Proprietors had laid out 34,493 acres

## Records of the Proprietors

- Three bound volumes & three small paper books at the Cumberland County Registry of Deeds
  - Deeds recorded in York and Cumberland Registries
- Map of Falmouth Neck at Portland City Hall
- Map of northern Falmouth at Falmouth Memorial Library—the “Rosetta Stone” for interpreting early deeds



*Part of Oxford & Cumberland Counties - 1771*

-  *Boundary of Ancient Falmouth*
-  *Proprietors Map at FML*

Image: LOC.gov





# The Proprietors Map

Original in poor shape

- Many areas are barely legible
- Professionally conserved

Digitally imaged by Osher  
Map Library in 2019

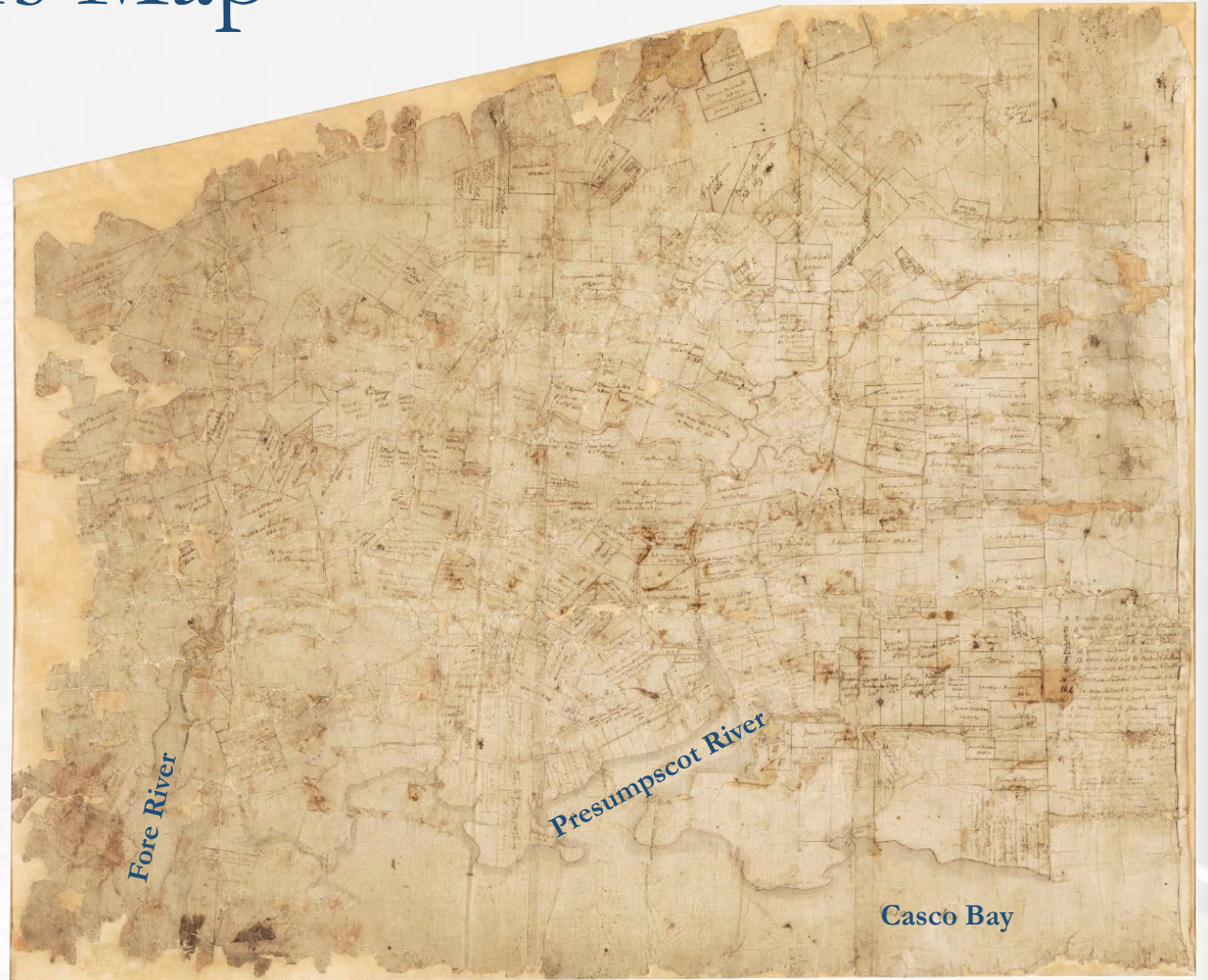
- Imaging pulled out details not visible to naked eye
- Accessible online:

<https://oshermaps.org/browse-maps?id=93179>



**Falmouth Memorial Library**

*Graphic: Falmouthmemoriallibrary.org*



*Image: Oshermaps.org*

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# Osher Map Library

## The Osher Map Library and Smith Center For Cartographic Education

- Houses tens of thousands of rare and historical maps
- Second largest collection of publicly available maps in the country
- 19,000 sq ft facility on the USM campus
  - 7,500 sq ft, two-story vault
  - Gallery
  - Reference Room
  - Education Center
  - **Digital Imaging Center**



**Osher Map Library**  
Smith Center for Cartographic Education



**UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MAINE**

*Graphics: Oshermaps.org*

Falmouth Heritage Museum





# Digital Imaging Center

## State-of-the-art imaging equipment

- **Two Phase One Camera stations**
  - 60 mega-pixel camera
  - 120mm Schneider-Kreuznach lens
  - Used to capture large and oversized maps & atlases
- **Nikon D850 stations**
  - 36-megapixel camera
  - Used to capture smaller to medium-sized maps & atlases

## Follows federal and international guidelines

- Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (FADGI)
- European Metamorfoze Standards



*Phase One Camera Station*

Image: Osbermaps.org

Falmouth Heritage Museum



# Digital Imaging Staff

Mr. David R. Neikirk  
*Digital Imaging Coordinator*

B.A. History, USM 2010

Grad Cert in Digital Curation,  
UMaine 2016

*Exquisite skill and experience with  
highly sophisticated imaging systems*



*Mr. Neikirk*

Image: Facebook.com

Falmouth Heritage Museum





# Digital Imaging Process

Imaging and post-production of the Proprietors Map took two days

Goal is a true image of the original map

- Fine color and spatial calibration ensured focus and color accuracy
- Visible light imaging
- Images are not altered to enhance features or details
- Image was collected in tiles and then stitched together



*Image: Osbermaps.org*

Falmouth Heritage Museum



# So What?

Maps are crucial to property history research

- Locating property from a deed with references to long-forgotten neighbors or landmarks
- Providing those details to find the right deed

The Proprietors “re-baselined” property ownership in Ancient Falmouth

- Map is the “Rosetta Stone” to interpreting deeds
- Map can provide guideposts for unpublished York deeds (recorded 1738-1760)
- Only detailed, contemporary map for the period



*Image: USGS.gov*

Falmouth Heritage Museum





# Finding Your Property in 1732

## Tools

Proprietors Map at [oshermaps.org](http://oshermaps.org)

Town Plat at [falmouthme.org](http://falmouthme.org)

Computer

- Bigger screen is better
- Photo-editing software

Ruler with centimeter scale

Calculator

If using a deed for reference:

- Meets & bounds software

## Process

Access the Town Plat

- Determine distance to known landmarks

Access the Proprietors Map

- Enter full page mode and zoom in
- Use centimeter ruler to determine scale
- Convert distances from plat to centimeters
- Use distances to landmarks to find location
- Take and save a screen shot of the map

Crop and enhance the shot to make it legible

Go back to Town Plat

- Use area tool to overlay the 1732 lot on the Town Plat



*It's not that awful—  
Your town historical  
society can help!*

Image: Clipartbest.com



# A Big Deal for Falmouth History

If you are researching...

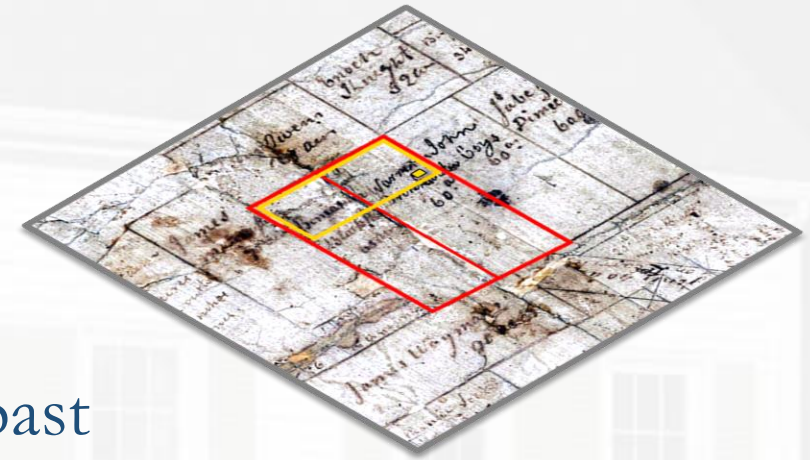
- Property in Falmouth
- Great Migration families in Falmouth

You are likely to hit an 18<sup>th</sup> century brick wall

The Proprietors Map may be your door to the past

- Depending upon legibility of your spot on the map and accessibility of deeds

The next presentation shows how



*Image: FHS with excerpt from Osbermaps.org*

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