

"THE TEN GROSS SISTERS OF WELLFLEET."

These famous sisters, who lived during the early part of the nineteenth century, were all members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, two of them being the wives of Methodist preachers.

They were all singers of ability. The accompanying print is from a daguerreotype taken on the occasion of the sisters being together for the first time in their lives, although their ages then ranged from eighty-three to fifty-six. The following notes are taken with a few changes and corrections from an article in a Cape Cod newspaper published at Barnstable in November, 1896, the only known copy of which is now in the possession of Miss Clara Steele of Brookline, one of the descendants of the family.

In the right-arm of Massachusetts, known as Cape Cod and encircling Cape Cod Bay, nestling in the town of Wellfleet like jewels held in the hollow of the hand are fifteen fresh-water ponds, seven of which are of more than usual size. The largest of these is Gull Pond. From the brow of the hill overlooking this pond is Gross's hill. At the foot of this hill a century of more ago, lived Thomas and Abigail Gross. They were the parents of fourteen children, ten girls and four boys. The ten daughters of this remarkable family known as the "Ten Sisters", whose picture copied from a daguerretype you now have.

A few moments in studying the picture as well as the lives of those who form it, may be profitably spent. The traits of conscientious precision which mark the family even to this later generation are apparent on every hand.

Seated in front at- at- your right is Aunt Lurania", familiarly so called. Next, Abigail, who married Thomas Barge, and Sarah called Sally, whose firm set lips express the courage and determination for which she was famed.

It will be noticed by our readers that the three oldest in consideration of their great age, are given seats in front, while it will not be noticed at first glance, or scarcely believed at the second, that the ages of the three are respectively eighty-three, eighty-one and seventy-seven.

The four next older are seated on stools or higher chairs behind, save Aunt Cynthia, the strong minded one, who determinedly discards hers. Aunt Cynthia rode a side saddle before bicycles were thought of and riding horseback over the sands of Wellfleet, carried pills to many an aching heart and troubled house, she had high courage and did not hesitate to go unattended by night. Not infrequently her shortest path lay through the village graveyard, through which she

often passed singing some Methodist hymn. Some mischevious young man once undertook to play a practical joke on her by dressing himself as a ghost and secreting himself behind a tombstone, as at a late hour of the evening she passed by. Who are you? she calmly demanded as the tall sheeted figure confronted her. "The Devil!" ejaculated the miscreant in sepulchral tones "Poor creature! Poor creature! I pity you" was her only response, as undaunted she went on her way, sining as before. The three at the right of Cynthia are "Polly" known as Mary, Rebecca and Bethriah, whose ages including Cynthia and beginning with Bethriah are respectively seventy-fi-sixty-five, (sixty-seven), sixty-five and sixty-four. Standing at the back of these four are Thankful, Deborah, and Maria, aged sixty-two, sixty-one, sixty-two, Maria Atkins, being the youngest had outlived the age when caps were assumed at thirty and has arrived at the age of fifty-six without wearing a cap; The peaceful look of the ministers wives Thankful and Mary, and the phophet's look of the "doctor" are something interesting to observe.

The following table, containing the vital statistics of the Gross family from the records of the town of Wellfleet, recorded by Samuel Waterman, town clerk, was copied by Rev. Bartholomew Otherman in 1856, and has been retained by members of the family.

Laurania, born Jan. 3, 1767, died 1856, Married Eleazer Higgins of Wellfleet; had ten children.

Abigall, born July, 1769, died 1854. Married Thomas Barge of Scituate; had two children.

Sarah, called Sally, born January 28, 1773, died 1867, Married Joseph Ryder, afterwards married John Chapman, both of Wellfleet; had no children.

Bethriah, born June 18, 1775, died 1868, Married Micah Dyer, Wellfleet, had ten children.

Rebecca Young, born March 10, 1783, died 1862. Married Capt. John Barnicoat; had one child.

Polly Stickney called Mary, born June 17, 1785, died 1876, Married Frank Cartwright of Newburyport, afterwards married Rev. Bartholomew Otherman, Methodist preacher. Had four children.

Cynthia born July 4, 1786, died 1865, was a doctor, Married Richard Atwood of Wellfleet had three children.

Thankful, born March 4, 1788, died 1872, Married Elijah Willard, itinerant Methodist preacher, had ten children.

Deborah born July 22, 1789 died 1882, Married Daniel Paine both of Truro; had two children.

Miriam called Maria born Aug. 27, 1794, died March 28, 1877. Married Freeman Atkins of Provincetown; had two children.

The engagement ring of Abigail is still in existence and is cherished by the members of the family in whose possession it is.