

FIRST SETTLER OF LINCOLNVILLE BEACH
HEZIKIAH FRENCH
Author unknown

Hezikiah French came to Lincolnville Beach sometime in the 18th century. There he established the beach and wharf area as "French's Beach" bought property all around the beach area and the road to "Lincolnville Corners" to the extent that the roadway was called "French's Turnpike". Hezikiah was the first secretary of the town of Lincolnville and organizational meetings were held in his house (now labeled as 25 Beach Road).

A visit to the French Cemetery at 2469 Atlantic Highway (the driveway to this house ends at the entrance to the cemetery) leads you first to the tombstone of Hezikiah French and then to his wife Eunice. Looking around the French cemetery one can see that there were a number of children and grandchildren of Hezikiah who lived and died in the area now known as Lincolnville Beach. From other sources we know that Hezikiah and Eunice had 8 children, seven survived Hezikiah's death in 1843 and his youngest child, Zadock was married to Deborah; they had 12 children. This could have been a mini dynasty but the last record of any of this family is in 1934 when Emma, the last surviving child of Zadock sold the Hezikiah French-Zadock French homestead to Herbert Bullock.

Lincolnville was part of the Ducktrap Plantation nurtured by Henry and Lucy Knox from their home in Thomaston. Patented to the Flucker family by King George the "plantation" fell to Lucy when the rest of the family returned to England after the Revolutionary War. As can be discovered by a trip to the replica mansion in Thomaston, Henry, the former General and Secretary of War under George Washington, tried everything he could think of to make the plantation pay, never did and died from a chicken bone stuck in his throat.

While we do not know exactly when Hezikiah came to the Beach we do know from the Waldo County records that in 1799 he bought much of the land from Henry Knox for the princely sum of \$50.00. One should not conclude from the date that Hezikiah began his occupancy of the property on the date of the deed. It was common practice in early real estate transactions that the deed followed a contract for deed and earlier occupancy. It is possible that Hezikiah had built his house and settled enough that he could part with the hard earned \$50.00. Most of what we know about Hezikiah comes from the fact that he died intestate and it was left to the Probate Court of Waldo County to divide the property remaining among the 7 living children and Francis, the son of the deceased son, Edgar.

Hezikiah apparently had no intent on dying ; at least he did not have a will. With all those children and property still in his name he at least did not have a plan in place. Instead the Probate Court of Waldo County appointed Joseph Miller, Nathan Knight and Abner Heal as Commissioners of the Court to divide and apportion the property of Hezikiah between his children. It took three years to do but in 1846 in a report recorded in Volume 43 and page 478 of the Waldo County Deed Records the appointed Commissioners proceed to divide the estate.

It is in this official report that we find the reference to "French's Beach and Wharf" and "French's Turnpike" and reference the "lime quarry in the "city of Isleboro". The beach and wharf are deemed a part of the homestead and one can speculate that Hezikiah was into building and shipping from the Beach area. The beach and the quarry were not divided by the report and a later examination of the Waldo County Deed Records would give further insight into the affairs of this family in the middle of the 19th century. The report is accompanied by a hand drawn map and details the division of much of Lincolnville Beach along Hwy 1 and Hwy 173 (now Beach Road but then called French's Turnpike or the road to Lincolnville Corners). The original map is still on file in the Probate Court in Belfast.

There are many interesting aspects to the report. First the property lines drawn in 1846 are mostly in the same place today. Second, one of the properties apportioned off to daughter Lydia Crehore was "one body pew in the Free Meeting House at Lincolnville Corners, being the pew deeded by Joshua Lamb to Hezikiah French on May 26th, 1830".

At the time of the report the youngest son of Hezikiah was living in the family home on French's Turnpike –now called 25 Beach Road. Zadock J. H. French, the youngest son, was unmarried when Hezikiah died, but he married in 1846 and continued to live in the house with his wife Deborah and together they had 12 children.

But the commissioners did not divide the estate so that Zadock received the family home and instead apportioned "Zadock's home, land and buildings" to the second son, Abel. The map shows that Abel had his home and blacksmith shop on Hwy 1 and that his portion proceeded west up the hill, and in an "L" shape included Zadock's house. Later the deed records show that Zadock purchased his lot from Abel and left the two tracts as they are today. Abel continued to own the property now known as the Spouter Inn .

Zadock's house and lot remained in the family until 1934 when the last surviving child, Emma, sold it to Mr. Bullock. From other sources we know that Emma lived in the house of her father and grandfather most of her life with her mother Deborah and brother Charles. Charles died in 1932 and willed all that he had to his sister, Emma. There is a picture of Emma, Charles and Deborah in front of the house in 1915 that was in the collection of Shirley Brawn and published in the Camden Herald shortly before Shirley's death. The reason for the picture and the story in the paper was to tell the correct story of Elenora French, daughter of Zadock and Deborah who fell off of the cliff of Mount Megunticook in 1864, the place now known as "Maiden's Cliff".

The cross on the mountain and the story behind it has been the subject of many articles. Many are pure fiction and without factual basis of any

kind. Shirley Brawn's article tells us that Elenora and her friends left the house at 25 Beach, went for a picnic on the mountain and she fell and died—probably at the Youngtown Inn. Elinor Hardy, in her article originally written in 1964 and abridged and edited in the extant document attached, gives us a little more detail about the event and the French family. (The souvenir booklet written by George Cleveland in 1887 entitled *The Fair Maid of Megunticook* is a fictional poem about the tragic event. There he says that Elenora fell because of her love for the North Wind. Of course, she was 12 when she died).

Ms. Hardy reports that Hezekiah came from Billerica, Massachusetts and became the "first settler of Lincolnville Beach." She also tells us that Zadock, the youngest child, was unmarried and was living in the family home until he married Deborah on October 3, 1846. Zadock was a farmer and according to the report of 1846 was apportioned substantial farmland from his father's estate.

So where are they today? Since 1934 (Emma lived until 1943 according to the cemetery record) there is no word of the Hezekiah branch of the French family. Hezekiah with 7 children surviving him in 1843, Zadock and Deborah producing 12 children from 1846 forward—what happened?

Some answers are found in the French Cemetery. Abel seems to have been married twice and had 4 children—two by each wife. But according to the inscriptions on the stones the children died young and so did Abel. There are other French stones and some detail may fill in some of the many blanks. Adeline lived only 6 years, Orison only 2; Lela died in 1910 after a life of only 42 years; Hudson lived from 1850 until 1910. Because of the placement on the stones—these persons were probably children of Zadock and Deborah.

ADDENDUM TO THE ABOVE PARAGRAPHS: CAPT. EBENEZER FRENCH, HEZEKIAH AND EUNICE'S SECOND CHILD, MARRIED ELIZA DRINKWATER. THEIR SON, JOHN PAUL

FRENCH, MARRIED JULIA A. MONROE, DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM MONROE OF LINCOLNVILLE. THEIR SON OSCAR EVERARD FRENCH MARRIED LILLIAN A. COOPER (WHO WAS FROM WIDOW'S ISLAND IN PENOBSCOT BAY). THEIR SON, FRANCIS M. FRENCH MARRIED BARBARA FORSAITH (WHOSE MOTHER ELLA THOMAS GREW UP IN THE HOUSE AT 2381 ATLANTIC HIGHWAY WHERE HER SON, DONALD FRENCH LIVES TODAY. DONALD MARRIED JEAN LAMKIN OF MANCHESTER, MAINE; JEAN LAMKIN FRENCH IS BURIED IN THE FRENCH CEMETERY

But there does not seem to be loving family that reports on their ancestors like others have done in the Lincolnville publications. No family history about Hezekiah, Abel, Ebenezer etc. But they were there. In the shed on the side of 25 Beach there is a sign from a wholesale grocer selling to Charles who obviously ran a grocery store there—"Charles French is forever barred from purchasing from us". Charles liked it so much he nailed it on the wall—and it is still there. Many stories that are heart warming and interesting about the early days of Lincolnville and—but nothing about the "first settler" Hezekiah or his 7 children or Zadock and the others —except for the maiden who left 25 Beach Road and went to Mount Megunticook for a picnic in 1864.