

David Thompson
NH's First Settler

David was born in 1592 to parents of Scottish descent in Clerkenwell, a suburb of London. David's father and mother were in service to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, a nobleman. David was educated with the Gorges children, learning to read, write, and calculate. In 1605 Gorges moved to the seaport of Plymouth to take up the command of the Plymouth Fort. In 1605 Gorges was given 5 Indians whom were kidnapped from NE by one, Captain Weymouth. The Indians were housed at the fort with David who became their friend and interpreter. This relationship was the key that unlocked NE to David and his dreams. Sir Ferdinando Gorges became the principal promoter of settlement in NE and David was his protegee. In 1607 at age 14 David sailed as part of an expedition to Monhegan Island, ME, a key fishing station, and the party established a Fort St. Georges (now Popham Beach, ME) at the mouth of the Kennebec River. David and some of the expedition returned to Plymouth in October 1607, however, Captain Popham and some men stayed the winter, but its harshness made the settlement a temporary one. In 1607 David learns building skills from his future father-in-law, William Cole, marrying his daughter in 1613 at age 21. In 1616 David sailed on an expedition to Biddeford, ME and stayed the winter to prove Englishman could survive NE winters. That expedition also visited the Isles of Shoals and the Piscataqua region and Massachusetts Bay. He camped at Little Harbor in July of 1616 and explored the Piscataqua to Great Bay. David returned to Plymouth in July 1617. In 1619 he sailed on expedition along the NE coast to better relations with the Indians and he visited, again, the Isles of Shoals and Massachusetts Bay, returning to Plymouth, Eng. in July 1619. David developed a plan for fishing from the Isles of Shoals and processing the fish on the mainland near today's Odiorne Point; a plan he sold to Plymouth merchants. In 1620 he convinced the Mayflower pilgrims to settle at Plymouth, MA instead of farther south. The Mayflower sailed from Plymouth, Eng. in September 1620. In December 1620 David left Plymouth to construct a fort on Gorges orders at or near Odiorne Point and stays at Odiorne working on the fort until his return to Plymouth in January of 1622. In November of 1622 David received a grant for 6,000 acres and one island from the Gorges led Council for New England. In January 1623, David, his wife, four year old son, John (his daughter stays with the grandparents in Plymouth), four to five servants, four men skilled in construction (later joined by three more), all sailed for Pannaway (Odiorne Point area) from Plymouth on the Jonathan. They dropped fishermen off at the Isle of Shoals and landed at Pannaway in the area of Little Harbor in March of 1623. David left Pannaway in the summer of 1626 to launch his trading post on Thompson's Island in Massachusetts Bay. He died, probably at Thompson's Island, in the early part of the year 1628 at age 36, an accomplished man.

Source: R.E. and M.R. Thompson, First Yankee, Peter E. Randall publisher, Portsmouth, NH. 1979