



It is probable that Zebulon West came into town with his father, Dea. Francis West, about the year 1720. He was admitted an inhabitant, that is, a voter, September 21, 1725. He was first elected to a public office in the year 1736, and from that time to the day of his death, thirty-four years afterwards, he was always in the possession of some place of public trust; and no man could be found who served in more capacities, or rendered more acceptable service. He was for seventeen years one of the selectmen of the town; he was town-clerk thirty-four years, and a justice of the peace twenty-six. He was the first person ever chosen to represent the town in the General Assembly, and represented the town at forty-three regular sessions; being first chosen in September, 1748, and with one exception was re-elected at every session thereafter until his decease. He was Speaker of the House of Representatives several sessions. He was Judge of Probate for the district of Stafford, from its organization, in May, 1759, to his death. He was also one of the judges of Hartford County Court, several years. All these offices, except those of selectman and speaker, and with the addition of member of the council or upper house, to which he had just been elected, he held at the time of his decease.

Mr. West was rather above medium size—was exceedingly popular with the masses, yet it is said he never associated with them nor was familiar in his carriage towards them. His personal appearance was imposing, and with his deportment, commanded the most profound respect. About twenty-five years ago, a venerable lady, then nearly ninety-five years old, said to me, she had known Zebulon West very well, and had lived near him. She described him as very sedate, inclined to talk but little, but was remarkable for his good temper. When he went into a place of public resort, all present uncovered their heads, and conversation ceased. It should be remarked, however, that in his day respect was mutual,—that the removal of hats in salutation was customary, and that the young were carefully taught to be silent and respectful in the presence of their seniors.

In the petty prosecutions for violation of the moral law,

so frequent in those times, Mr. West carefully distinguished between youthful thoughtlessness and confirmed depravity; and whenever such prosecutions arose from the disposition to annoy or revenge, he took care, as far as possible, to avoid making the law instrumental to gratify private malice under the mask of public virtue. It used to be said that "Zebulon West never did but one wrong thing,"—and that was certainly a very unfortunate one for the harmony of the town. It was the procuring by his superior influence the location of the meeting-house contrary to the just and strenuous wishes of nearly, if not quite a majority of the inhabitants of the town, at a place south of the geographical center. But notwithstanding this momentary resentment, he always exercised an almost unbounded influence in the management of town affairs, and was, through an entire generation, the principal man in Tolland. He educated three sons at Yale College; Stephen, the eldest, was a clergyman, settled in the ministry at Stockbridge, Mass., and became one of the most distinguished theological writers in New England. Nathaniel, the second son, did not study a profession after graduating, but settled in Tolland as a farmer, was elected town-clerk after the death of his father, six years, then emigrated to Vermont. Jeremiah, the youngest son, settled as a physician in Tolland. He was a surgeon in the revolutionary army, was a representative in the General Assembly ten sessions. He was also a member of the convention in 1788, and voted for the adoption of the federal constitution, and he was justice of the quorum or Judge of Tolland County Court fourteen years.

Zebulon West lived upon the farm lately owned by Bilarky Snow, in the south part of Tolland, and died on the 4th day of December, 1770, aged 65.

NOTE.—The record, so far as I have recited it, exhibits the character of Zebulon West as nearly faultless, yet when the whole is seen, he will appear, to some persons at least, in a light that will throw a different shade over this fair picture. Mr. West was a slaveholder and held one of the sable sons of Africa as property. My evidence for this assertion is found in the town's book of records of births, marriages and deaths, from which the following is copied: "Zebulon

West's negro man Bristo, was married to Betty, Molatto woman on ye 21st day of September, A. D. 1757." This record is in the handwriting of Mr. West, and doubtless was made by him when town-clerk.

The name of this man was Bristo Harris, who lived until April 1, 1802, and is still recollected by some of the inhabitants of Tolland.

The darkness of this shade upon the reputation of Mr. West is very much relieved, when we recollect that Connecticut tolerated and protected slavery by its laws, and that our Puritan fathers saw nothing in slaveholding, nor even in the slave-trade itself, inconsistent with the Christian character.

It may here be stated that during the existence of slavery in Connecticut, several families in Tolland were in possession of that species of property, and that on the abolition of slavery by law, several slaves in Tolland gained their freedom. On the occupation of several islands in Narragansett bay by the British, in the revolutionary war, two or three families, with their slaves, came to Tolland and remained here until the enemy were expelled.

Pelatiah, son of Deacon Francis West, married Elizabeth Lathrop, December 5, 1734. Their children were :

Elizabeth,	born	September 17, 1735.
Susanna,	"	March 23, 1737
Eleazar,	"	November 9, 1738.
Hannah,	"	March 23, 1741.
Zerviah,	"	August 2, 1743.
Eunice,	"	April 30, 1745.
Elijah,	"	March 7, 1747.
Daniel,	"	July 22, 1749.
Prudence,	"	June 1, 1751.
Mary,	"	June 28, 1753.

Eleazar, son of Pelatiah West, married Olive Redington, December 6, 1761. Their children ; Charles, born October 4, 1763 ; Thankful, born November 20, 1765.

Christopher, son of Dea. Francis West, married Amy, daughter of Jonathan Delano, October 25, 1732. Their children were :

Priscilla,	born	August 26, 1733.
Francis,	"	October 30, 1735.
Jonathan,	"	December 30, 1737.
Jerusha,	"	April 27, 1740.
Miner,	"	January 9, 1743.
Lois,	"	in Coventry.
Mary,	"	May 25, 1750.

Solomon West, from Lebanon, married Abigail Strong, of Lebanon, October 10, 1743. Their children were :

Solomon,	born	August 23, 1744.
Ruby,	"	August, 1747.
Abigail,	"	December 19, 1748.
Lydia,	"	March 5, 1752, died October 23, 1772.
Esther,	"	March 17, 1754.
Chloe,	"	April 14, 1756.
Stephen,	"	August 19, 1769.
Jarusha,	"	June 6, 1763.